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MODERN fishing

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GWS are not an overnight blow in as some media would have you believe

CULL OR BE KILLED?

Is a shark cull in order or is it just a short term solution to a long term problem?

Recently at work and for the second time this year, I got wind of the gut wrenching news of another shark attack in Ballina on the NSW north coast. These attacks hit me hard as Ballina is my home town, my favourite place in the world and a place where I grew up surfing with mates on the very beaches that these attacks occurred. The first attack this year (back in February) was unfortunately fatal and although I didn't know him personally, when I saw who it was it instantly took me back to a time when our paths had crossed - paddling through the line-up at Boulders Beach and seeing his grin from ear-to-ear after he'd just caught the wave of the day.

The most recent attack in Ballina hit much closer to home. Thankfully this one was not fatal, but nonetheless, it was very serious. I had grown up living and surfing on Angel's Beach in Ballina and my mates and I (as did most others in the area) surfed in a tight-knit group. Matt Lee who was recently attacked, surfed in a 'rival' group, equally as protective of 'their' patch as we were. Kids are strange creatures sometimes and I now look back on that little 'surf gang' as being pretty silly.

Now I wouldn't call Matt a good mate but over the years we've hung out from time-to-time through other mutual friends and I soon realised that Matt (and his 'gang') were all good blokes so when I heard of his attack, it hit me like a tonne of bricks. It's hard to describe that sinking feeling as you never think it will happen to anyone you know and to such a good human to boot. Since then, Matt has been doing well albeit still being stuck in hospital with a very long road to recovery.

Shark sightings have plagued the area since the attacks and a wave of panic has swept through the north coast community as even hardy surfers are opting to stay out of the water, local business owners are fearful of a loss of tourism dollars and many people are calling for a localised cull. It's a tough one for me – coming from that area and knowing the people who have been directly affected almost had me thinking a cull might be the right idea. I was shocked to hear of friends who were backing the idea of a cull – people I would have never thought could be in support of these measures - such is the effect the attacks have had on the community.

After a lot of consideration for myself though, I can't possibly agree that killing these animals is the right thing to do. As an angler, I learnt from a young age that it's our responsibility to look after our fishery and I've formed the strong opinion that if it's not to be consumed or utilised then you don't kill it. After all, great whites are a protected species and I hate to sound like a broken record but, we're in their home! Maybe the increase in numbers suggests that they needn't be protected anymore but the fact is they currently still are and they are an important part of the marine food chain (one that every human who eats seafood relies upon).

I recently spoke to Professor William Gladstone (Head of School of Life Sciences) about the problem. Professor Gladstone has studied Great Whites extensively and in particular, their inshore movements. When I asked what his thoughts are on a potential cull and also about past attempts at controlling shark numbers his response was quite passionate; "White sharks are protected because large numbers were killed in the past. Killing them now in response to these recent incidents could threaten their recovery and have wider-reaching ecological consequences by removal of this apex predator. The WA program to kill white sharks led to the unnecessary deaths of many sharks of other species. We should focus on ways of living with nature rather than always trying to control it." As we speak, recreational fishing groups in the area are by the looks of things, mostly in favour of a partial cull and to be honest, this makes me pretty sad. I personally don't see the need to catch or kill a big white shark for any reason except if it is positively identified as the actual shark that has attacked someone and even then, I'm not sure that it is warranted.

The way I see it, we've got a large population of sharks patrolling the coast, possibly more than anywhere else in the world right now and we have a unique opportu9nity at our finger tips. An opportunity to lead the world in research and implementation of cutting edge shark deterrent systems. These animals aren't going anywhere and we certainly aren't going to be run out of the water so why not take this opportunity to put some real funding into developing a long term solution that might just allow us to enjoy the water without the fear of an attack and without the need to randomly kill a few animals that most likely wouldn't be the culprits of any of the attacks on humans anyway. Or we could just shoot a couple and pretend that we've fixed the problem…

This is just my view. I'd love to hear your thoughts on the matter. Hit us up on Facebook or email editorial@modernfishing.com.au.

Ads

"We have a unique opportunity to lead the world in research and implementation of cutting edge shark deterrent systems"



A white shark patrols an east coast beach

Photo: William Gladstone

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REC FISHO'S UNDER THREAT

Once again, anti-fishing lobbyists are threatening our access with bogus reports!

On my recent world fishing tour for my new series on 7 Mate I spent a bit of time fishing Florida. Florida is fishing mad and it seems everyone owns a boat and recreational fishing is massive. We fished for tarpon, bass, snook - you name it and there were fish everywhere. Now Florida has a larger population than the whole of Australia and yet the fishing is fantastic. What is really interesting is that there are numerous marine parks, but recreational fishing is encouraged which is a far cry from Australia where anti-fishing groups continue to attack fishermen and push to increase marine park lockouts. I fished the infamous Everglades National Park which is famous for its flats fishing and was blown away by the amount of fish we encountered. I caught my first tarpon just metres from the boat ramp. Now interestingly tarpon must be released and you are not even allowed to remove them from the water. A classic case where careful management is better than banning as the tarpon fishing here is world-class!

Sadly, Australia is still a long way behind and anti-fishing groups constantly blame recreational angling as the main cause of the supposed loss of fish stocks. Earlier this week I had a call from Mick at the Compleat Angler saying he had an ABC News crew chasing comments on the recent push for increased marine park lockouts around Sydney.

I seem to be constantly defending recreational fishing against biased claims and dodgy research and it seemed that was the case here. A survey conducted by scuba divers found no big fish anywhere except in no fishing zones. Apparently they tried to count fish at 25 sites and when there were no big fish they concluded that anglers were catching them all. Wow, that is about as unscientific as it gets. I make a living filming big fish and it all has to be done free diving otherwise you have no chance. If you scuba dive, the bubbles will scare the fish away so how on earth can you claim that as legit research. Mind you it gets worse because they ran the survey in the off season when there are few big pelagics around. So, either they have no idea about the fish they were looking for, or they did it deliberately to get the results they were after. It seems to be a common theme - that scuba divers are constantly trying to force recreational fishers out of areas they use. I can't help but think this isn't about conservation as much as it is about sole access.

> **"Either they have no idea about the fish they were looking for, or they did it deliberately to get the results they were after"**

I'm never one to back down from a fight so while a little bit reluctant considering the ABC's usual stance, I still met with the camera crew on my way in from a hot morning catching heaps of kingies and can you believe it took less than ten minutes to catch a big fish for them. Yes, that's right, despite the divers not being able to find them at 25 sites I did it in a matter of minutes and right next to the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

As I released the fish to fight another day I couldn't help but wonder why anglers always seem to be targeted in this country by the radical fringes. In reality, anglers are the true conservationists, working hard to preserve and enhance fish stocks. It works so well in the Everglades and will work here if common sense prevails. That's the key - we need common sense and not zealots hell bent on banning fishing, dictating our future. So what can you do? Well it's easy - get out there and tell your local state and federal politicians how important recreational angling is to you!! MF

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CATCH OF THE MONTH

Congratulations to the winner of our Catch of the Month competition! Email your entries to the Modern Fishing team at editorial@modernfishing.com.au for your chance to win next month

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HOW TO ENTER

If you'd like a chance to win a LOWRANCE Mark 4 Sounder, send us an email at editorial@modernfishing.com.au

The Lowrance Mark 4 Sounder unit features track-back technology, a Mini-SD card slot and is valued at $299 RRP.

Make sure you include a high-resolution photo and a bit of information about yourself and your catch. The winner of Catch of the Month will be decided by the Modern Fishing team on not only the quality of the catch, but the story behind it too!

LOWRANCE

DALY WINNER

G'day Modern Fishing,

My name is Llewyn and I am 14 years old. Here is a picture of me with a 105cm barramundi that helped me win 1st prize at the Junior Barra Classic on the Daly River. It was caught in the last hour of the comp when we were making lunch. We were trolling big green Bombers with the rods in the holders, when all of a sudden I hooked up! We all dropped our sandwiches. When I finally got her in the boat, we set to work tagging her, then got a quick photo so she could swim away and fight another day.



Hi Llewyn,

Wow! That is a stomper of a barra buddy! Congratulations on taking out the Junior Barra Classic, you certainly deserve it with a fish like that! We reckon we would have dropped our sandwiches too (and our jaws)!

You better just keep an eye on your mailbox too as you've had another win. We'll be sending a Lowrance Mark 4 sounder your way, congrats!

We look forward to seeing more of your catches in the future mate!

MF Team



LANDED... LUCKILY

G'day Modern Fishing,

I just wanted to share with you guys a short story of my lucky catch.

I was fishing the Eucumbene River for a few trout, just before the seasonal closure when I caught the brown trout in the pic. Not such a big deal except for the fact the fish was tail wrapped in my mainline, nowhere near the small nymph that I was fishing with. I could see the fish had somehow wrapped itself up and wasn't actually hooked so you can imagine my surprise when I actually landed the thing! Keep up the great work with the mag.

Marc Neilson

G'day Marc,

Anyone can hook them in the mouth but to lasso a fish's tail takes much patience and a great deal of skill. We're glad to see you've mastered the art! Haha.

No, sometimes you just get lucky and in a sport such as fishing, you've got to take what you can get.

Well done on the catch mate.

MF Team

CATCH OF THE MONTH

BREAMIN' AT BUNDABERG



Hi guys,

My name is Robert and I am 13 years old. My family and I are sailing up the east coast of Australia and we have been fishing heaps. We were at Bundaberg and I decided to throw some bread in to see what would come. Nothing did at first but then the bread drifted under a catamaran and all of a sudden there were bream everywhere. My younger sister and I got our rods and threw our little hardbodies under the cat where the splashes were. Then a nice 40cm bream took my lure and I was on. When we got him up I was beaming so we took some pics, measured him then returned him to the water.

Hi Robert,

Thanks for the email mate. It's amazing how much life a single boat hull can have under it and judging by your photo, there were some big bream in there too. Throwing hardbodies under moored boats is certainly one of the most exciting ways to catch them.

Good luck to you and your family with the rest of your trip along the coast, we hope you catch a few more good fish along the way. Don't forget to send us a pic or two if you do!

MF Team

QUALITY QUEEN

Hi Modern Fishing,

Just thought I would send this in because I am a huge fan of your mag.

A few days ago now my dad and I went out on a fishing charter in Darwin Harbour. We were using some soft plastics to target whatever was out and about. We got off to a slow start with only two small trevally. Unfortunately the wind picked up and we were forced to move around to the other side of the harbour where my dad landed a small queenfish. After a few drifts across the bay with nothing more interested in our offerings we exited the bay and saw some more queenfish herding the bait balls up to the surface and smashing them. We shot across and drifted across the point but the school kept diving and teasing us until I finally managed to entice this beautiful 80cm fish onto my plastic. After 15 long minutes she was in the boat for a few happy snaps.

Joshua Coates





G'day Josh,

Cheers for sending in the shots and the story behind your queenie. It's always nice to find a good fish after a slow day on the water. It just goes to show that even fish filled places like the NT have their off days but in the end, persistence pays off.

MF Team

GME

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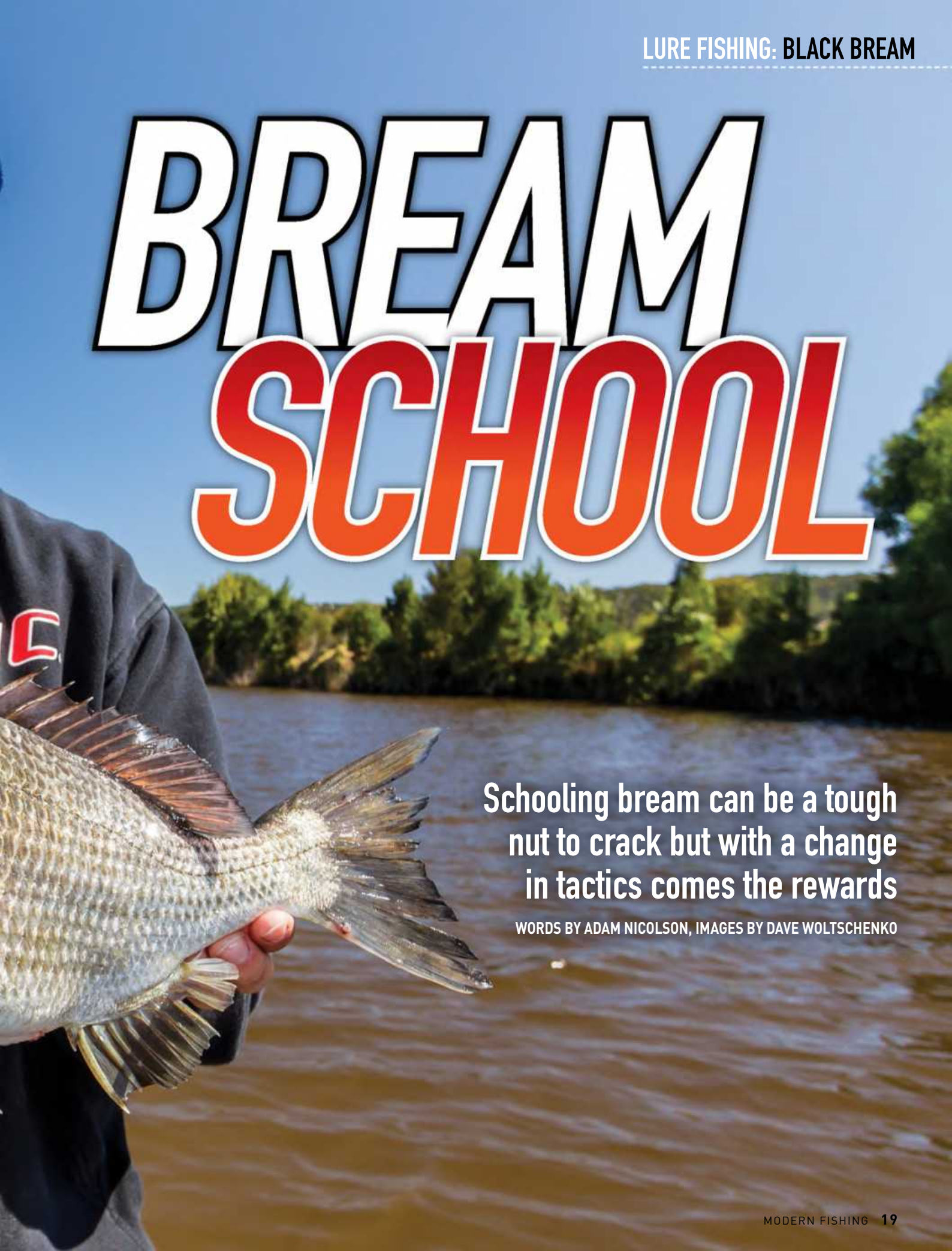
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BREAM SCHOOL



Schooling bream can be a tough nut to crack but with a change in tactics comes the rewards

WORDS BY ADAM NICOLSON, IMAGES BY DAVE WOLTSCHENKO





This sounder image clearly shows the upper limit that the bream are willing to hold, most likely due to the salinity

TECHNOLOGY TALKS

Having a good quality sounder will help you catch fish, knowing how to use it well enough to place all your trust in what you're seeing will help you catch even more.

Scenario: You're on your way to that favourite fishing spot, one eye on the prize ahead and another on that all important sounder. All your settings are on point and you have full trust in what shows up on the screen in front of you and when that first arch appears, your eyes light up. Then another… and another… and another until the screen is full to the 'bream' (pardon the pun) with arches signalling you've a); found the motherlode or b); your sounder is playing up and you best move on to that spot you had your sights set on earlier.

It's not hard to blame a glitch in technology and move on but in reality, this is a scenario that's all too common when chasing black bream in the southern parts of the country. It all takes place at different times of the year (depending on the location), it's the black bream's spawning season and the fish are rampantly climbing over each other in order to continue their own bloodline.

Like shooting fish in a barrel right? Well, no it's not at all! While these fish can be pretty easy to find, they are rarely easy to catch and can often lead to the angler experiencing a sudden loss of hair or maybe even a short trip to the nearest asylum!

Rest assured though, if there is one thing you should always keep in the back of your head when fishing is that fish rarely get lock jaw, instead they are simply favouring a technique or a lure that you haven't tried yet. In this article, we'll take a look at a range of techniques, lure styles and some other tricks to put those 'impossible' fish on the deck.

TOP SPOTS

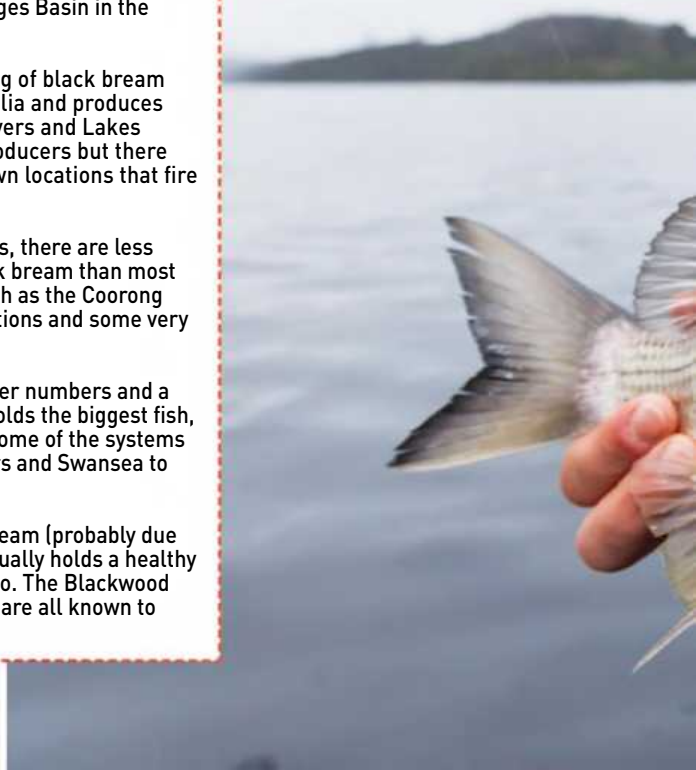
NSW – Being in the uppermost extremity of the black breams range, there are very few reliable hotspots for finding these big numbers of fish however the one's that do produce can host some red hot fishing. Wagonga Inlet (Narooma), Pambula Lake and St Georges Basin in the north are all regular producers.

VIC – Mallacoota is the undisputed king of black bream fishing in Victoria and probably Australia and produces big numbers of schooling fish. Lake Tyers and Lakes Entrance are another couple of big producers but there are countless smaller and lesser known locations that fire up during the season.

SA – Due to SA's lack of major estuaries, there are less areas with reliable populations of black bream than most other states however certain areas such as the Coorong and Kangaroo Island hold good populations and some very large fish also.

TAS – While other states may hold larger numbers and a greater area to fish in, the Apple Isle holds the biggest fish, hands down. The Derwent along with some of the systems to the south of Hobart are big producers and Swansea to the north is another Tassie hotspot.

WA – Not well known for their black bream (probably due to the abundance of other fish), WA actually holds a healthy population and some good sized fish too. The Blackwood River, Swan, Canning and Leschenault are all known to contain good numbers of fish.





WHEN, WHERE & WHY?

Before you can even begin to refine your techniques to consistently catch these tough schooling fish, you need to find them and finding bream schooling like that of the above mentioned scenario depends on where you're fishing, and what time of year also.

In Victoria and southern NSW, the spawning period generally occurs in spring while In Tasmania, WA and SA, bream will spawn through spring and over the summer months as well. The fish however will generally congregate well before they actually "do the deed" and it's in this period that they are most regularly targeted.

Finding the schooling fish is determined by the conditions at the time and the size of the system you're fishing. If say Mallacoota is your fishing ground then you've obviously got a lot of ground to cover as it's a massive system where as some of the smaller lakes make the fish a bit easier to find. Numbers and average size of the fish generally tend to be smaller in these systems though too. The most reliable factor in finding the fish however is rainfall with the fish having a definite preference for areas where brackish waters flow into water of a higher salinity creating multiple layers in the water. These layers can actually be pinpointed on a quality sounder and you'll notice that the fish will be sitting in one area above or below a particular salinity line (it's not the salinity you can see on the sounder, rather the clutter from micro-organisms that are gathered within that water). So therefore, rainfall plays a big part in whether the fish will be found in the lower reaches or further upstream. To state the obvious; if there has been plenty of rain then that should push the fresh down into the lower reaches to meet the salt which is where the fish should be. No rain, then the fish will be searching further up river for that junction point.

The most important tool for finding them is your sounder. The fish are not looking for structure so you need to cover ground and rely on your sounder to find the fish. As they move around a lot, don't expect to find them in your usual spots and even if you're on the fish one day, they can quite often be gone the next.

"The sounder lights up as fish after fish stack up on the screen... you've found the motherlode!"

TIMELY APPROACH

Maximise your fishing at the right times. A steadily rising barometer can act as a light switch to trigger bream to feed so keep an eye on it and get on the water at the right time.

When the rain sets in, spawning black bream will push further down river to where the brackish water junctions with the salt

THE RIGHT FISH

Fishing in the Gippsland Lakes area recently, I was reminded how important it was to not just find the fish, but find the right fish. There was no problem finding fish, the lake was chock full with just about every flat holding hordes of bream but believe it or not, it wasn't until we moved away from these massive schools that we started to get the bites consistently.

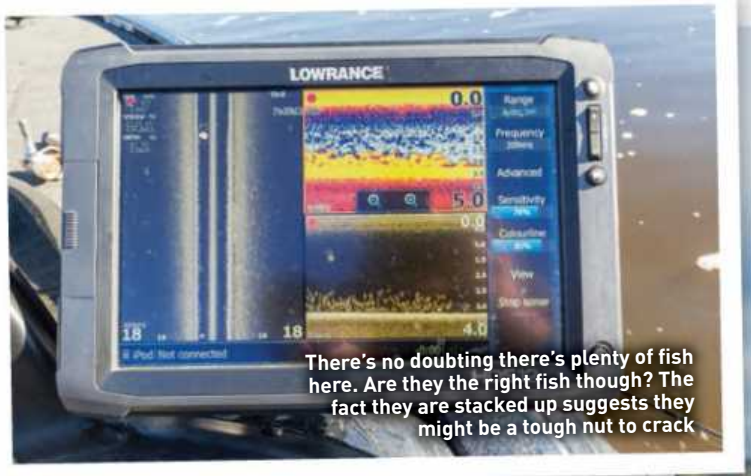
We spent two days in the area with the first being one of the most frustrating days I've had on the water. We were getting the occasional bite but with the hundreds of bream under the boat at any given time, it's more than a little annoying when you're struggling to boat one fish. We got a few good fish at the start of the session but they were anything but savage so we moved on. We found more on the sounder not far away and it soon became evident that it didn't matter where we went, the fish were there in big numbers. By the end of the day, we had searched most of the lake for that one good school but to no avail, eventually returning to the original spot we tried first up. We actually ended up getting a few more fish here in the afternoon and came to an interesting conclusion.

The one area we were getting the most bites was actually the place that was holding less fish on the sounder. There were still plenty, but they weren't stacked up on top of each other like in the other areas, instead they were in single file moving across the bottom. Cue the light bulb moment – these fish were actively feeding across the bottom while the others stacking up in big numbers were in full spawning mode. Maybe the occasional bite we had been getting from these school fish was purely out of aggression? It looks like we have a game plan for day two!

Day two was as if we were in a whole different place. We were getting consistent bites which allowed us to focus on that area, throw a mix of lures and find exactly what they were after, and we did.

OBSERVATION

Spend the time to find the 'right fish'. The 'right fish' meaning the ones that are actively feeding. By close observation, these can often be found using a quality sounder to watch the behaviours of different schools.



There's no doubting there's plenty of fish here. Are they the right fish though? The fact they are stacked up suggests they might be a tough nut to crack



FISHY FACT – HYBRIDS

An interesting thing you'll find in areas that contain healthy populations of yellowfin and black bream is that the two species can interbreed resulting in a hybrid species. These will often be found in amongst the schooling black bream. Perhaps they are just a little bit confused about their identity, as they can also be found on the beaches and river mouths when the yellowfin are spawning too.



Possibly a big hybrid? It can be hard to tell sometimes

THE MIDAS TOUCH

After throwing half the tackle box at the fish, one lure eventually proved to have the "Midas Touch". A Bassday Range Vibe was catching more than its fair share, so much so that the four of us fishing were at one point all throwing the exact same lure. Now before you go and max the credit card out on a stack of Range Vibe's, know that this was the lure of the day and while they are worth having in your box, what you need for these fish is variety. They're not always going to be focussed on the same food items so your lures need to vary from day to day.

From around twenty fish between us for the first day, we bumped that count up to around thirty fish each for the second day simply by putting ourselves on the right fish and working through the tackle box until we found the right lure on the day.

You're fishing mostly on sand flats but generally in deeper water than you would be out of the spawn season so lure styles such as vibes, blades, sinking stick minnows, soft plastics and other oddities such as crab style lures work well. Look for something that will get down deep and stay there which generally rules out most of your diving hardbodies.



Vibes are the number one weapon of choice for targeting school fish

"You'll have to dig deeper into your bag of tricks and that can only make you a better fisho in the end"

ETHICS

It's important to remember that you're fishing for these fish around the time of their spawning so looking after the fish intended for release should be a priority. Keep the fish in the water where possible (except for a quick photo of course). The spawning habits of bream see them stack up for months at a time but it's only a percentage of this time that they are actually spawning so it's almost impossible to consider locking anglers out of major estuaries for such a long period (there are some exceptions that have contained lockouts). Instead, fisheries management plans seem to be doing their job and in the most part, black bream numbers are very healthy across all states.

TECHNIQUE IS EVERYTHING

Whether you're fishing dense schools of fish or thinner fish feeding on the bottom, they are usually lacking that ferocity of those caught in the warmer months and often a little more coaxing is required to get them to bite.

Depending on the area you're fishing in, the bait that the fish are feeding on (and various other factors I'm sure), the correct technique will differ. The right combination of lifts, twitches and pauses will win out in the end and to find this is simple; time on the water and mixing up your retrieve is the only way to go until you find what's working.

Generally speaking though, slow and steady wins the race. The fish are more lethargic in the colder water and can often need a little more time to commit so rather than the long lifts that you might adopt in the warmer months, try to keep the lure on the bottom and in the fish's face. Long lifts are replaced by short, sharp twitches and long pauses. One thing that is characteristic of bream whether you're fishing warm or cold water, they love to hit the lure on the pause. Because of this, keep a tight line and watch the line where it enters the water with intent and at the slightest twitch, strike at the fish.

With every change of lures often comes the need to vary the retrieve. Here's three techniques for three of the more popular lure styles.



This is the one you're after. 45cm's of blue-nosed black bream!

THOSE IN THE KNOW

Talk to the locals. The guys running the tackle shops are usually a great source of honest knowledge for what's happening in the area, where they're biting and what on.

"The right combination of lifts, twitches and pauses will win out in the end"



Some big yellowfin can show up as a surprise catch amongst the schooling black bream




Observation is important. A keen eye on the sounder will help you to nut out the behaviour of different schools



VIBES/BLADES – TWITCH AND BURN:

The nature of blades and vibes is that they have an inherent action without having to work the lure too much. This makes them great for a very slow retrieve while still giving off plenty of those fish attracting vibrations. Try between one and three very small twitches (not lifts) with the rod tip and then 'burn' (stop) the lure for an extended period on the bottom. Continue varying the amount of twitches until you find the right amount that turns the fish on.

SOFT PLASTICS – THE SLOW HOP:

Again, with this retrieve you're working the lure to a minimum so look for a lure that has a good action. Tail wobble is important so rule out any SP's that don't have this. Small grub tail lures and paddle tails are great as they only need the slightest amount of movement through the water to get the tail going and will even flicker in the current as the lure is paused.

Lift the lure slowly off the bottom and then speed the lift up slightly as it comes up. Work it up a foot or two off the bottom and then set it back down. The flutter on the way down is usually what gets the fish to bite.

STICK MINNOWS – SHORT STROKE:

Sinking stick minnows are a great little lure to throw around and are probably the least utilised lure in bream fishing. This is always a good thing as the fish tend to favour lures they haven't seen a lot of. Bream fishing takes place mostly in heavily fished areas so 'odd' lures like these are always worth a shot.

Get the lure all the way to the bottom. Keep your rod tip low and complete a series of short strokes of the rod tip back towards you. The stroke (rather than a twitch or lift) will get the lure moving from side to side rather than up and down. Keep that pause incorporated in your retrieve and don't be afraid to slow it right down so the lure is darting across (and stirring up) the sand.



Natural colours are usually the standout but you never know when the water's dirty

While it's not essential, Sidescan can really improve your ability to find the fish

THE FINESSE TEST

The best part of fishing a species that can be so tough to crack is the lessons you learn along the way. Another thing to come out of the two recent days of bream fishing mentioned above was the need to put everything in your favour.

After the first day, we returned to the cabin feeling somewhat defeated by the tough fish and conditions. We still weren't quite sure what we had been doing wrong but we were damned if we were going to get back out there the next day without putting everything in our favour.

We'd been fishing mostly 6 and 8 pound leaders on the first day and while we find this to be good for most applications, when things are tough, if you're not doing everything you can to get the bite then you simply won't get it. Moving down to 4 pound fluorocarbon and ensuring all our leaders were up around the two metre mark at least gave us the confidence that it wasn't our set up that were spooking the fish.



If fish are not destined for the table, do your best to release them in good health

SCENTS MAKE SENSE

Keeping on the topic of doing everything you can to turn the fish on when the bite's tough, why not try using scents if you're not already. I was never a big user of scents on my lures until I started to take note of the amount of times someone would out-fish me when using them. The same technique, the same spot and even the same lure and the one with scent gets eaten more often than the one without so I now use it on all my lures for all species.

I'm still not 100 percent convinced that it's not just coincidence and I stand by the idea that a good action and retrieve is far more important but I'm working on the basis that it can't hurt to have it on there and may just tip the scales in your favour. Pro-Cure Scent comes in a range of different flavours and seems to work well. As does S-Factor, Mega Strike, Sax Scent and Pro Lure. Give them a try!





Lengthening and downsizing your leaders is a good idea on school fish. They are usually well away from structure so you can take your time with them

PRIME TIME

As with most forms of fishing, low light periods present the best bite windows so try to focus your efforts around these times. In saying that though, bream seem to be one of those fish that will turn on at odd hours so it's always worth fishing right through the day.



Dusk is a great time to find active fish





A brace of quality south coast fish

There's plenty of things that are just plain frustrating about targeting schooling bream and I myself will admit that I would much rather be flicking around a surface lure in the height of a warm summer but what I have learned from fishing for these fish is that I've learned more… if that makes sense? What I mean is that I've had to dig deeper into my bag of tricks, think harder about what the fish want, become more efficient with my electronics and a host of other things to fool these fish and that can only make me a better fisho in the end. Accomplishment through perseverance and determination is what it's all about! MF



Overcast days often produce great fishing although the fish will really get riled up with a bit of chop on the water

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RIG IT RIGHT!

Here's 10 of Oz's best baits, 20 rigs to fish them and where

THE MODERN FISHING TEAM



Having access to such a huge variety of species here in Australia means we also need to have plenty of different tricks up our sleeve to cater for different methods of fishing. After all, there is no one size fits all rig and there is certainly not one bait that works best for all fish.

Anglers do however have a tendency to over complicate things which is where it can get messy. Try to keep the presentation simple, compact and stealthy then the bites will come your way. Generally a couple of different rigs for a particular bait species will just about cover all scenarios or at least provide one layer of a more complicated rig.

When it comes to the bait. Fresh is always the best option and live is generally even better. It is a rare day indeed that anyone should walk into a bait and tackle shop to buy frozen bait simply because if you're going to bother to go fishing, you should always put in that extra effort to collect the best bait as you'll need all the help you can get! When you think about the location you're going to fish, you should really ask yourself if the bait will be holding there. This is what is going to attract the fish you're after and if the bait is there, you can bet you'll be able to catch it using one method or another which means you have the first foot in the door. Match the hatch!

All the baits outlined in this article are readily available, easy to catch and are deadly on some of our favourite Aussie species. The rigs are simple, cheap and all require very little time to complete. Even better, mix and match where you see fit, experiment with your own variations of these and find what works best for you and your area.

PRAWNS

Prawns are without doubt the most used bait in this country. Most of us would have started out grabbing a pack of frozen prawns from the servo and a good portion would have caught their first fish on one. As handy as those frozen servo prawns are though, try to avoid them where you can and stick to the freshly caught ones.

Why are they such a good bait you ask? Well, they're readily available in most estuary systems, they school up making them an easier target for predators, they're easy to use and last but not least - if fish are anything like humans, they'll love the taste!

Prawns can be caught by scoop netting or spot lighting in the shallows at night and also by sounding them up in some locations and cast netting them providing it's legal to do so in the chosen state.

FISH WHERE?

Both of these rigs are ideally suited to inshore/estuary species such as bream, flathead and whiting. Fish near weed beds with shallow flats surrounding them. This is where the fish will be actively seeking out prawns.

LIVE RIG

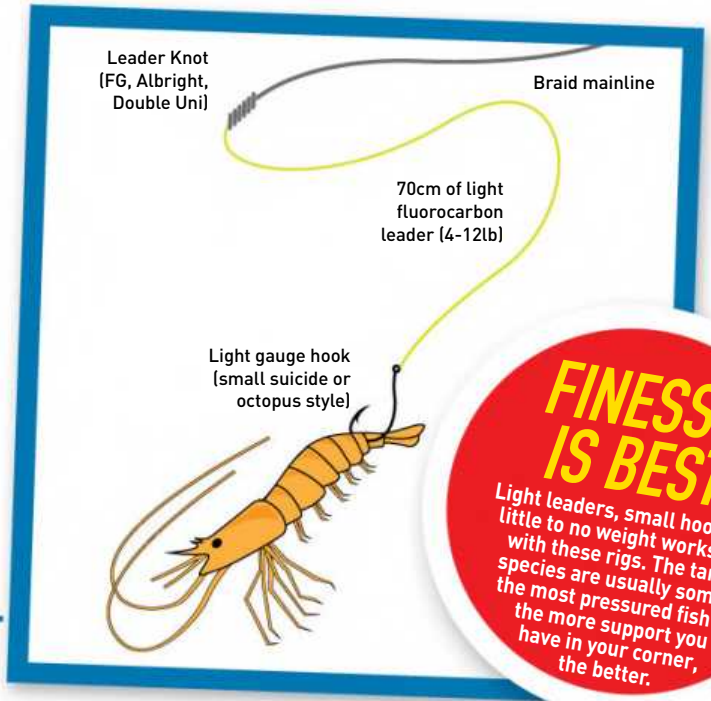
This is the simplest rig you could possibly tie yet there is no better way to fish a live prawn for some of our light tackle estuary species.

STEP 1 – Connect your mainline to a suitable leader via a Double Uni, FG, Albright or basically whatever you're comfortable tying. Your leader size should be determined by the species you're after and also how clear the water is and how pressured the fish are. Go as light as you possibly can and use fluorocarbon as it sinks.

STEP 2 – Again using the knot you are most comfortable with, connect your leader to a suitable hook for the situation. Choose your hook with maximum exposure in mind and also the ability to be taken whole by the intended target species.

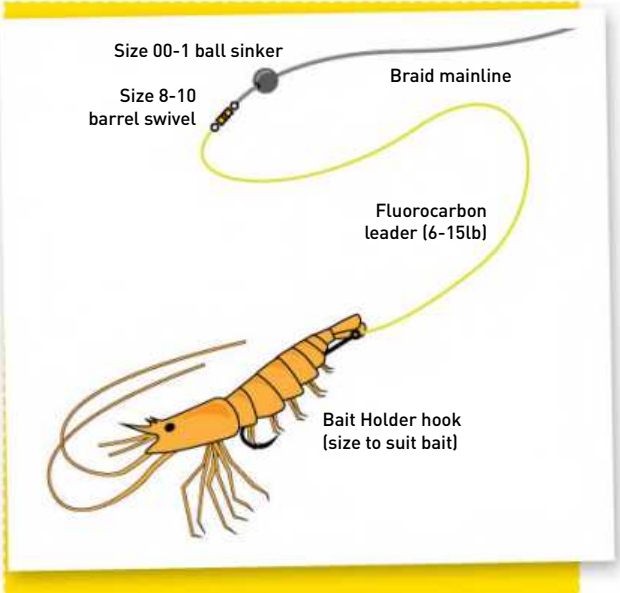
STEP 3 – To connect the prawn, simply pin it lightly through the last section of its tail, preferably from one side to the other rather than through the bottom and out the top. This will give it more freedom to move about. Also worth a try if you're after slightly bigger fish, thread two or three prawns on the one hook.

You may have noticed we forgot the sinker right? This rig is far better when fished unweighted across a flat but if you're looking at fishing in deeper water or current, use split shot sinkers, crimped about 500mm above the hook to add just enough weight for it to sink naturally. The last thing you want is for it plummet straight to the bottom.



FINESSE IS BEST

Light leaders, small hooks and little to no weight works best with these rigs. The target species are usually some of the most pressured fish so the more support you have in your corner, the better.



THE CLASSIC

The classic rig for fishing a prawn is probably the easiest to fish as it's weighted, so you're able to cast easily and keep a tight line which allows more sensitivity when a fish picks up the bait.

STEP 1 – Choose the sinker that suits the application. Usually when fishing over sand and minimal current, a ball sinker will be perfect. Use just enough weight to keep it near the bottom. It's a good thing if the current is picking the sinker up every now and then as it stirs up the sand which will bring the fish in for a look. Thread the sinker onto a light mainline and connect mainline to a small barrel swivel.

STEP 2 – Via a Uni knot or a locked Blood knot, connect around 6-700mm of fluorocarbon leader (around 6-15lb) to the swivel and then again at the other end to a suitable hook. Bait holder hooks have one or two small barbs on the back of the shank as well as on the tip – these are ideally suited to this rig. Choose a size that suits the size of the prawn so the top of the hook sits at the prawn's tail and the hook exits the prawn just before the head.

STEP 3 – The point enters the prawn on the underside, just in front of the tail, then thread the prawn all the way onto the hook until the point is able to be brought out the underside between the last section of the body and the start of the head. The prawn should be stretched out straight rather than curving with the hook. You can ensure this by half hitching the leader around the tail of the prawn and the end of the hook.


Spotlighting at night is a great way to catch a few prawns



Nippers are one of the easiest baits to collect and also one of the most effective

YABBIES/NIPPERS

Yabbies, bass yabbies, nippers... whatever you call them they are deadly baits for estuary species and should always be fished where they are caught. A simple yabbie pump and a bucket is all you need to get one of the best baits in the estuary. Flats that are exposed on a low tide are the ones that will be holding yabbies and there is generally no shortage of them. Pump them on the low tide as the flat is dry and then fish the top of them as the tide floods the banks.

Light tackle estuary species are usually the target however whiting are the top prize for a well rigged yabbie. They are perfectly suited to sift through the soft sand to find these little crustaceans and they absolutely love them!

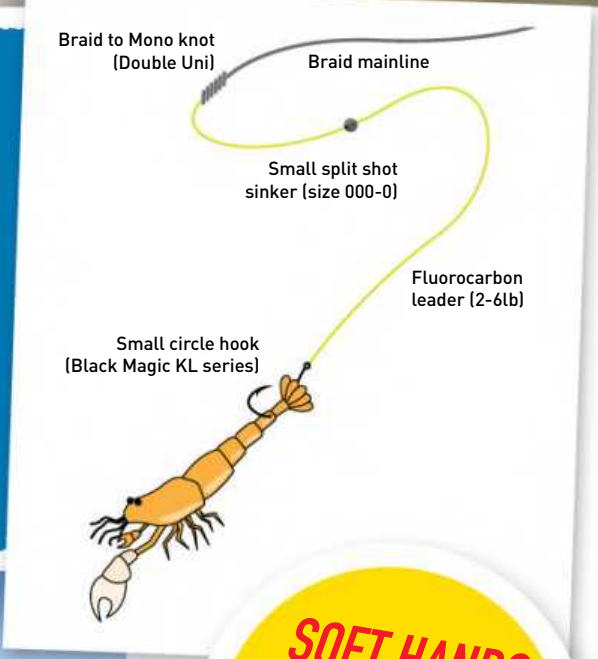
LIVE RIG

Yabbies are best fished live, simple as that. By allowing them to crawl around on a sand flat as if they would normally, they'll stand a much better chance of being picked up by a fish. The purpose of this rig is to keep the yabbie on the bottom while still allowing it to move about.

STEP 1 – If whiting is the target, think light. Their eyesight is fantastic and the bigger fish can be very wary. We're talking 2-6lb leader and make it well over a metre. Connect to the braid mainline with your chosen braid to mono knot. Crimp on a small split shot sinker about 700mm up the leader from where the hook will be to allow for plenty of movement.

STEP 2 – Connect leader to a very small circle hook (the Black Magic KL series is a good option) via a locked Blood or Uni knot.

STEP 3 – Thread nipper onto the hook in the soft section just between the tail and the arch on its last section then flip the point and bring out the top of the nipper, about 10mm into the body. This will give it plenty of freedom to move about and it should stay live for quite a while. The reason for flipping the hook is due to whiting always feeding from above – this way the hook point is exposed rather than dragging in the sand.



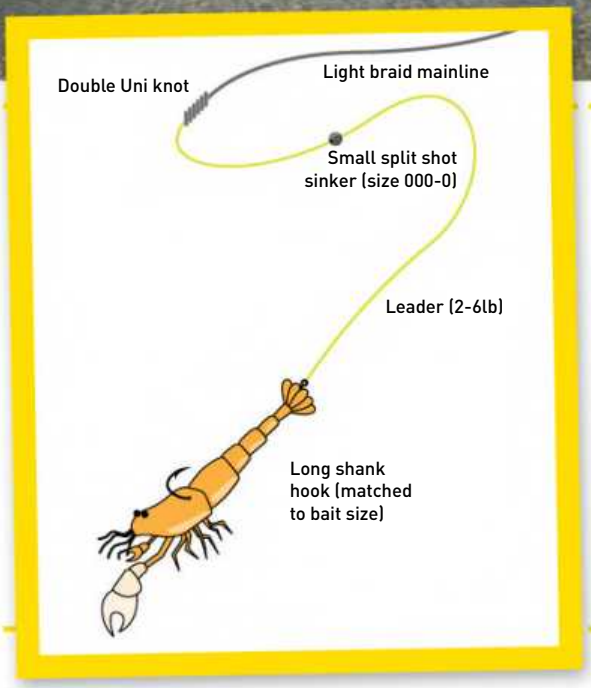


FISH WHERE?

Nippers/yabbies should always be fished on and around the flats that they were caught from. They'll still work elsewhere but it's all about maximising your chances.

SOFT HANDS

A whiting's soft mouth and the light line used calls for soft hands and a long light rod. Look for something around the 7 foot range with a nibble tip and a slow taper to cushion the line as the fish lunges. Don't strike too hard!



OLD SCHOOL STILL WORKS

As mentioned, it's better to fish yabbies live but if a few die while you're fishing or from when you've pumped them out, this is a simple and effective way to fish them. To counteract the yabbie not being alive and able to move about, fish this rig while drifting over sand flats to cover ground.

STEP 1 – Connect braided mainline to a light 2-6lb fluorocarbon leader with your chosen braid to mono knot. As with the live rig, crimp on a small amount of weight in the form of a split shot sinker about 500-700mm above the hook. As you're drifting, you may need a little more weight to keep on the bottom.

STEP 2 – Due to the bait being dead, the fish may be a little more tentative so opt for a long shank hook instead of the circle. This should pin them more easily if they are being finicky. Connect to leader via a Uni knot or locked Blood.

STEP 3 – Enter the hook point into the same soft section as the live rig except follow right through to the head of the yabbie. This will keep the bait straight and looking as natural as possible. Again, turn the hook point so it exits through the top of the yabbies head for the best hook up rate.

STRIP BAITS

Strip baits can be anything you like meaning they have a broad appeal. You can shape them to suit the intended species you're after and to suit the rig you're using. Some common species that will be used for strip baits are slimy mackerel, mullet, yellowtail, tailor, squid and cuttlefish but don't let these species limit your imagination.

From the estuary to offshore, there aren't too many species that won't take a well presented strip bait from time to time.

TOUGHEN UP

Use baits with a tough skin to improve the longevity of the bait. Mullet, tuna, yellowtail and various other reef species will work well provided they are of legal size to use. Large squid or cuttlefish strips are very effective here too and are particularly long lasting.



Snapper are suckers for a well presented strip bait

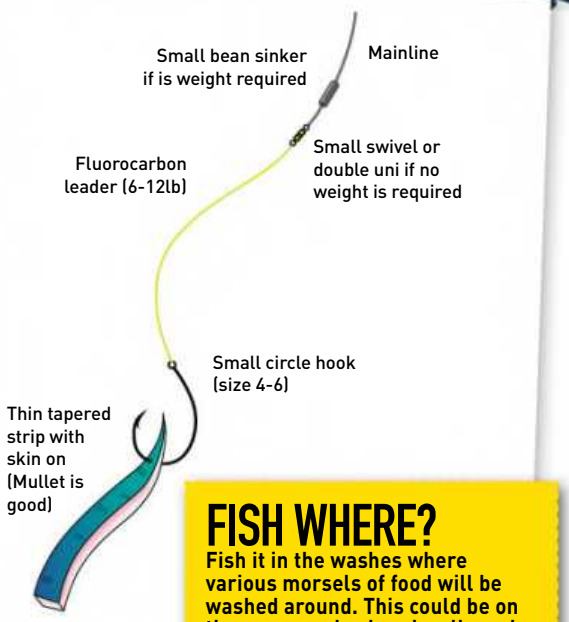
THE FLOATER

This is a great rig for fishing the washes around the rocks and breakwalls for big bream but it can be adapted to suit most situations where the fish are sitting high in the water column. Fish it unweighted or very lightly weighted to allow it to trundle around in the wash. This is where the bigger fish will usually be holding.

STEP 1 – If there is not too much wash or current, forget the sinker but if a small amount of weight is needed, use a small bean sinker threaded onto the mainline and secure in place by tying your mainline to a small barrel swivel.

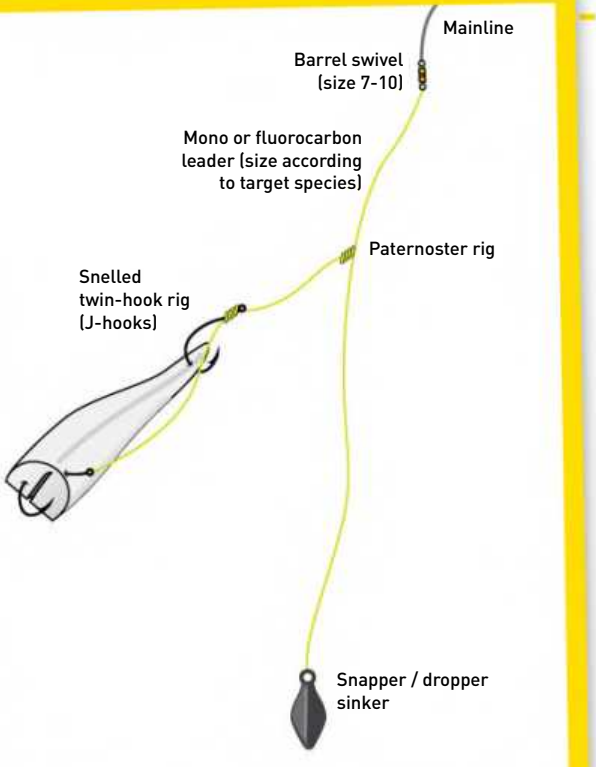
STEP 2 – If fishing around the rocks, use a suitably sized leader to account for the rough nature. Somewhere around the 12 pound mark should be fine but work your way down if you're not getting the consistent bites. Fluorocarbon, generally is more abrasive resistant. A reasonably long leader of around 700mm to a metre is good here. Connect one end to your swivel and the other to a small circle to suit the target fish.

STEP 3 – Bream love mullet, it's a fact! And the great thing about mullet is they have a thick skin that makes it very hard for peckers to destroy or steal the bait. You can use any strip baits but mullet is a great start for most species as well. Cut a strip to suit the species, generally nice and thin and taper the strip to a point on one end. Pin your circle hook right in the end of the tapered section only once, making sure the skin is pierced as well.



FISH WHERE?

Fish it in the washes where various morsels of food will be washed around. This could be on the ocean rocks, breakwalls and basically anywhere else affected by a bit of swell.



THE BIG BAIT

This rig is specifically for those fishing the reefs and are looking for that bigger fish to come along. The point is to deploy a big, tough bait that'll give the bait enough time on the bottom for the bigger fish to be drawn in and find it. Pickers can be just too quick sometimes. Whole sides of mullet, sergeant baker or yellowtail is a great tough bait for this.

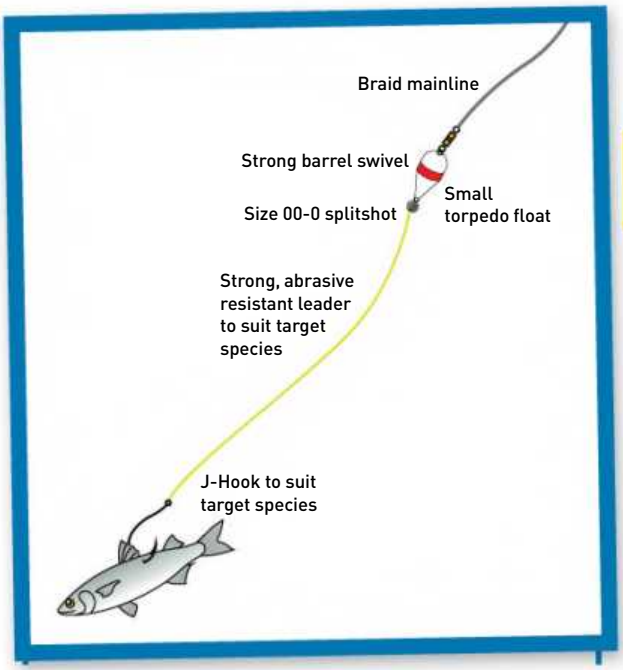
STEP 1 – First thing is to select the right sized leader for the job. Snapper and a few other reefies from the southern states may only require 20-40lb leader while some northern fish like big red emperor might require 60-80lb or even more if there is plenty of reef. Tie your mainline and one end of the leader to a solid barrel swivel using a 4-5 turn Uni knot.

STEP 2 – You'll need to tie a single hook Paternoster rig for this one. If you're not sure how, check out Google and you'll soon see, it's a very easy rig to tie. Avoid a two hook Paternoster for this one as you're looking for that one bigger fish. More baits will bring more unwanted small fish. Use a dropper sinker with enough weight to hold your rig straight up and down under the boat.

STEP 3 – Because you're using a big bait, a snelled two hook rig is ideal for this. Take your whole fillet of bait with the skin facing down and cut lengthways through the flesh side, all the way through the flesh but without cutting the skin. Fold over itself so the skins are together and pin the top hook of the snell to the small point of the bait and through the skin. Line the bottom hook up so there is a small amount of slack between the two hooks and pin through the flesh and skin where the two outsides of the skin meet.

FISH WHERE?

Basically anywhere in deep water when you need a bait that's going to outlast the relentless pickers.



MULLET

Mullet are a great bait to use whether they are alive or dead with just about anything eating them and are probably the most widely spread baitfish in the world. They are easy to keep alive in a simple bait tank set up and tough when on the hook so here's two great ways to fish them live for a variety of species.


Try a live mullet if you're after those bigger lizards

SNAG SURPRISE

Deep in the timber snags all around our coastline are some tough predators that love mullet but it can be pretty hard to present a bait to them effectively without getting caught up in the snags. This rig allows you to get a bait right in there while also helping you to react quickly enough to pull the fish out of there as soon as you see the float go down.

Tough leader is a must here. This rig is great for species such as barra, mangrove jacks and fingermark which will all have you in the timber if your tackle's not up to scratch.

STEP 1 – First up, connect your mainline to a leader of around 40-50lb (or relative to the fish targeted) via a strong barrel swivel.

STEP 2 – Feed a small torpedo float onto your leader and push it right up to the swivel. About 30-40mm below the float, crimp a small split shot sinker to the leader. This acts as a stopper and will also keep the float sitting upright in the water. Finish off by tying a strong j-hook to the end of your leader via a Uni knot. Your leader length shouldn't be too long (around 500mm) so the bait doesn't get caught up in the timber.

FISH WHERE?

You can fish this rig just about anywhere you like, as long as the leader lengths allow the bait to get to where the fish are. Up in the snags is good but also bridges, rockwalls, jetties and pontoons.

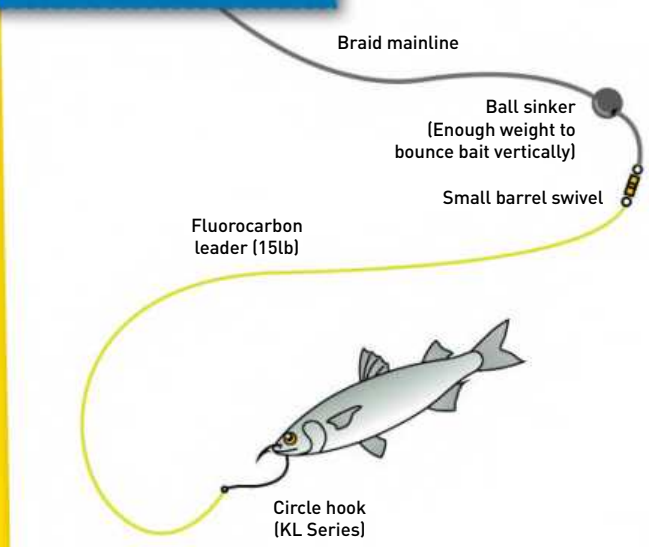
STEP 3 – Pin the live mullet lightly just behind the dorsal fin and cast in tight to the snags. If the mullet is hugging the surface, you can crimp on another small split shot just above the bait to hold it down in the zone.

KEEP THEM HEALTHY

Use a quality aerator or bait tank pump to keep mullet healthy and make sure their water is changed regularly. An active mullet always seems to do better than one struggling to stay upright.

FISH WHERE?

The ideal location to fish this rig is along rock walls or over rocky ground. Large flathead love these areas and the best option is to drift over the top, making sure your bait is bouncing among the boulders below.



TEA BAGGING

No, this has nothing to do with heading to your grandmother's place for morning tea. This is a deadly technique for drifting in rocky areas and is perfectly suited to targeting large flathead. The rig is fished vertically and the term "tea bagging" refers to the technique of dipping your rod up and down to avoid getting the bait snagged up in the rocks while also helping to attract any flathead in the area. Simply drift close to the wall in a boat and bounce the live mullet constantly across the bottom as you cover ground.

STEP 1 – A very simple running sinker rig is needed for tea bagging. Slide a ball sinker onto the main line (size dependant on the depth and current – make sure there is enough weight to keep it on the bottom and sitting vertically) then simply connect your mainline and one end of a 15lb leader to a small barrel swivel.

STEP 2 – Use around 700mm of leader and then connect a circle hook to the bait end. The Black Magic KL series is a good option. These are relatively snag-free and as you are already lifting lightly with the tea bag technique, if a fish grabs the bait the lift should be enough to roll the circle into the fish's jaw.

STEP 3 – Better hook-up rates tend to come from a bait pinned vertically through the bottom and top lip however they can also be pinned on the belly side, behind the anal fin. This can be good as it encourages the bait to swim up and away from any snags.

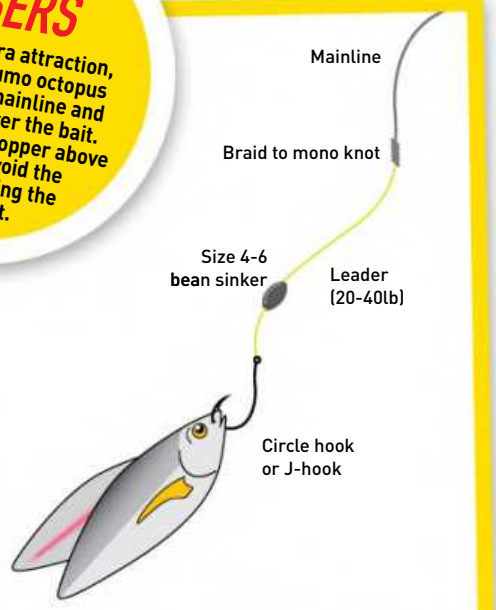
SLIMEY MACKEREL & YELLOWTAIL

Both are prime offshore baits and the main food source for many predatory species along the whole coast of Australia. Both are great when used as live bait and equally well as dead baits for reef species.

They can be easily jigged up on inshore and offshore reefs by using simple Sabiki jigs and keeping an eye on your depth sounder. They can also be caught from jetties and other land based locations by berleying them closer to shore.

SKIRT CHASERS

For a bit of extra attraction, slide a small lumo octopus skirt onto the mainline and allow it to sit over the bait. You may need a stopper above the hook to avoid the skirt obstructing the hook point.



BUTTERFLIED YELLOWTAIL

FISH WHERE?

Offshore reefs, inshore reefs and just about everywhere else. A slowly drifted butterflied bait is a great option for many species, not just snapper.

Butterflying a bait is a great way to turn a dead bait into a much more enticing offering. Have you ever dangled a bit of steak in front of a dog and have him only show interest when you shake it about? It works a bit like that if you get our drift.

Presented down a light berley trail on the inshore reefs and allowed to drift down slowly is a top way to connect with some better than average snapper. The larger fish always seem to be more willing to move higher in the water column so fish it with minimal weight, be patient and wait for that bigger fish to come up.

STEP 1 – Connect your mainline to a 20-40lb leader (if chasing snapper) via a double Uni, Albright knot or FG knot and allow a good metre or more of leader.

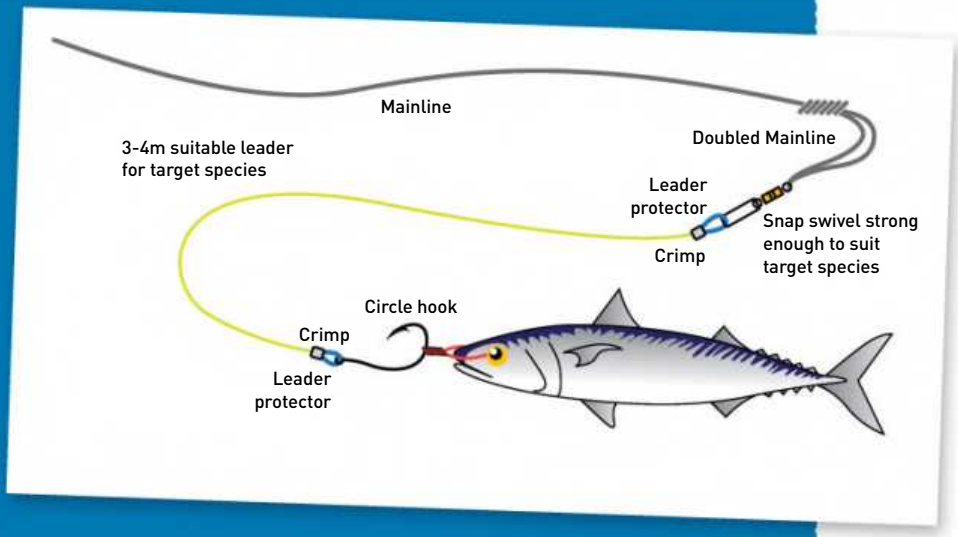
STEP 2 – Slide around a size 4-6 bean sinker onto leader. Connect a quality circle or j-hook (whatever works for you) to the end of the leader. You'll see now, the sinker is free running all the way to the hook.

STEP 3 – Lastly, butterfly the yellowtail by filleting the fish on both sides, starting at the tail but don't cut the fillet off behind the fish's head. Instead, use your hands or the knife to pull out the back bone of the fish which leaves you with just the head and two fillets attached. It's these two fillets that are so enticing to the fish when they are flapping around in current so avoid pinning a hook in them. Instead, simply pin the hook from bottom to top through the fish's lips. To fish it, simply cast away from the boat and allow it to float slowly down into your berley trail.

BRIDLED SLIMEY

Not much can resist a live slimey mackerel when slow trolled in the right areas. This rig is simple to put together, keeps the bait healthy and can be used on the surface or down deep with the assistance of a downrigger.

This can be used for a variety of species, most commonly for species such as marlin, kingfish, cobia and other pelagic species. Let's aim this one towards marlin and you can adjust your gear to suit smaller species.



STEP 1 – Form a double in your mainline via a Bimini twist or Australian Plait and connect your to a solid snap swivel. On your leader (about 3-4 metres) which will be chosen to suit the species you're after, slide on a crimp and some leader spring or leader protector in that order and then turn leader point over to run back down through crimp so you have made a loop, then crimp tight. Clip the snap swivel onto this end.

FISH WHERE?

The best place to troll a live slimey is around the outside edges of other slimy schools. This way it looks to the predators like a baitfish has been separated from the school and therefore, an easy target.

STEP 2 – At the business end, follow the same process as above with the exception of feeding the leader through a solid circle hook before making the loop and crimping. Gamakatsu's Nautilus Circle is a good option and as always, select the size to suit the target species.

STEP 3 – Take a rubber band and loop it onto the hooks gape. Slot the rubber band onto the bait needle and pierce live bait in soft section in front of the eyes and bring the rubber band's end through with it so the hook is pinned up against the bait. Take hook point through the rubber band loop on the other side of the bait, then make 2-3 twists in the band with the hook. Then simply feed the hook point through the loop of the band between the fish's eyes making sure the hook finishes facing up. The bait is now ready to be trolled slowly and can be attached to a downrigger to get down deep.


A light outfit and a squid jig is all you need

SQUID

A squid's appeal is undeniable, fish love them as much as we do! They're incredibly versatile, tough and are able to be fished live or as dead baits and they can be cut and folded into some enticing forms.

Avoid the frozen rubbish from the service stations where you can. You can purchase better quality frozen squid from good bait and tackle shops and even better, around most parts of the country they can be reliably caught. This is always the better option and what you don't use for bait, you can take home for a feed.

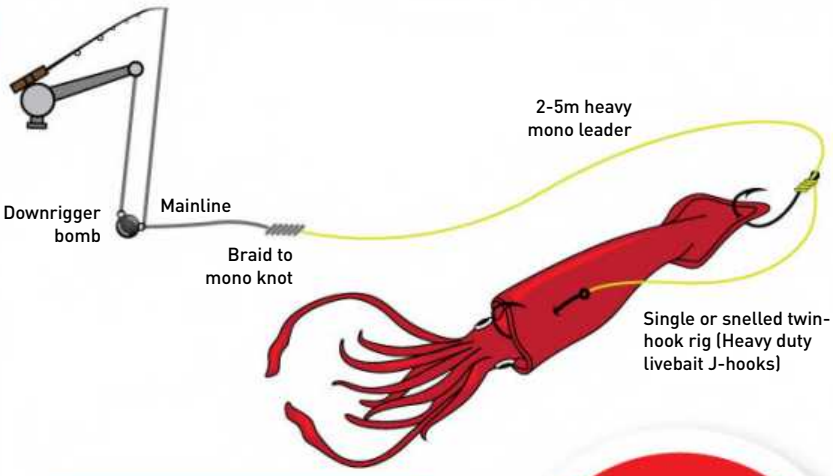
A KING'S FEAST

One of the most effective methods of catching a kingfish in any part of this country is to down rig live squid. It is the one bait they can't turn their nose up at. They'll happily snub a perfectly rigged slimey mackerel or yellowtail in some cases but you stick a live squid in front of them and watch the fireworks when the squid inks in self-defence!

STEP 1 –Attach your heavy braid main line to a heavy 80-100lb leader via a PR or FG knot. Google these if you are unfamiliar or if that's too much, you can simply connect them using a heavy duty swivel and a 4-6 turn Uni knot.

STEP 2 – Attach either a single or two snelled heavy-duty live bait hooks to the business end of the leader. Gamakatsu make a great version of this, just make sure you get the size right as the sizes tend to be a little smaller than you would be used to.

STEP 3 – If using a single hook, pin the squid once right at the peak of the hood (top of the bait) and that's it. If using a snelled rig, pin the top hook in the same spot and the second hook at the base of the hood (make sure it's on the top of the squid and not the belly side). From here, you simply let the bait out about 2-5 metres (your choice) and then clip the release clip onto your mainline. Drop the downrigger bomb to the desired depth while letting out line from your reel at the same time. Once the bait is at the right depth, keep enough tension between the rod tip and bomb to put a small bend in the rod. You can fish the reel in gear or in free spool, depending on the size of the bait usually and also on whether you opt to use circles or j-hooks.

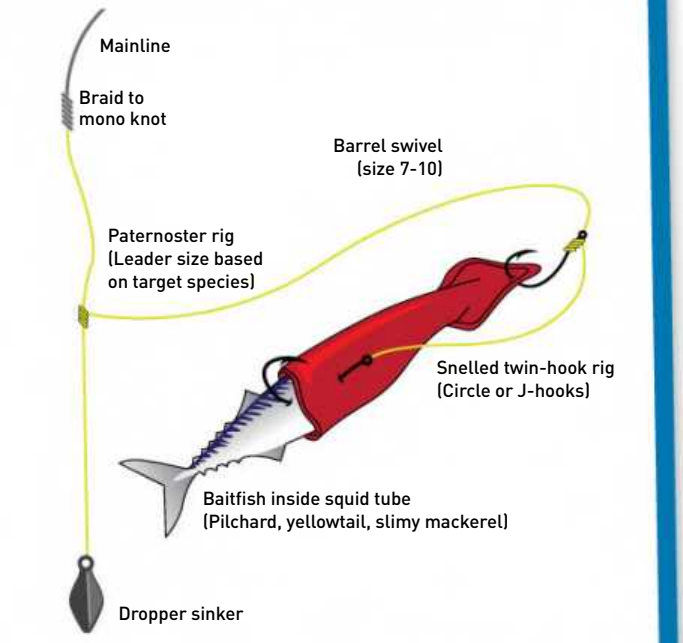


FISH WHERE?

Offshore islands, pinnacles or along coastal rocks. Anywhere you can find the fish on the sounder is a good place to start. Drop one down even while you're searching for the fish.

INK TANK

The thing that makes fresh squid stand out from frozen is the ink. This stuff drives fish wild so where you can, catch them live and use them live or at least freshly dead and never wash that ink off the bait!



SQUID COCKTAIL

There are quite a few names for this bait, the "squid condom" is one of the more unflattering ones but is quite aptly named. Basically, you're combining the squid's hood with a dead whole fish such as a pilchard or yellowtail to hopefully up the appeal and presentation of the bait.

This is a great bait for reef fishing and is good for a variety of species. It can be fished on various rigs such as a Paternoster or other similar dropper rigs or also can be fished lightly weighted over shallower reefs. For this purpose, we'll rig it on a Paternoster.

STEP 1 – As with other Paternoster rigs in this feature, connect the main line and the leader via a quality barrel swivel. Select the leader based on the target species but a general size would be 20-40lb for the southern states for snapper and maybe a bit beefier in the north.

STEP 2 – Form the Paternoster rig and use either a single dropper or a twin. With this bait though, you'll need to snell a two hook rig on each dropper. The twin hooks are used to hold the two baits together.

STEP 3 – Take just the squid tube and then feed the whole dead fish bait of your choice, head first into the tube and pin the top hook of the snelled rig through the point of the hood, through the head of the fish inside and then back out through the squid. Next, take the second hook and pin through one side of the squid, through the fish bait and back out the same side of the fish bait that you entered. This should have the fish secured inside the squid tube with just the tail of the fish hanging out the bottom.

FISH WHERE?

This rig when incorporated with a paternoster is designed to be fished on the deeper reefs but the same bait can be deployed in a variety of offshore environments. If fishing shallow, use a running sinker rig and cast away from a drifting boat.

WORMS

For those keen on beach fishing and indeed light estuary fishing, a fresh or live worm can outperform just about any other bait on its day. The key is to use them where you catch them. That means when using beach worms, use them on the same beach you caught them or when using tube worms, the estuary sand flats are the shot.



FREE FLOW

However you're rigging worms, allow enough so that there is plenty dangling off the end of the hook. No fish is going to get excited over a stiff dead worm that follows the shape of the hook.

ESTUARY ENTICER

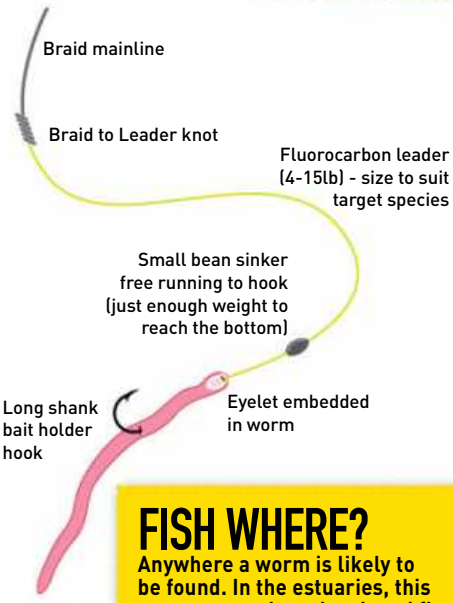
Blood and tube worms are a great estuary bait and are particularly deadly around the flats for species such as whiting, bream and flathead. Presentation is the key – light leaders, minimal terminal tackle and an enticing bait.

This rig incorporates a free running sinker all the way to the hook. Cast into your chosen spot and then allow a foot or so of line to run through the sinker so the worm is wriggling freely around in the current.

STEP 1 – Connect your main line to the lightest leader you can afford via a braid to mono knot that you're comfortable with tying. If chasing bream and whiting and there is relatively clear water, 4-6lb is good while flathead may require you to upsize - between 12-15lb should be enough.

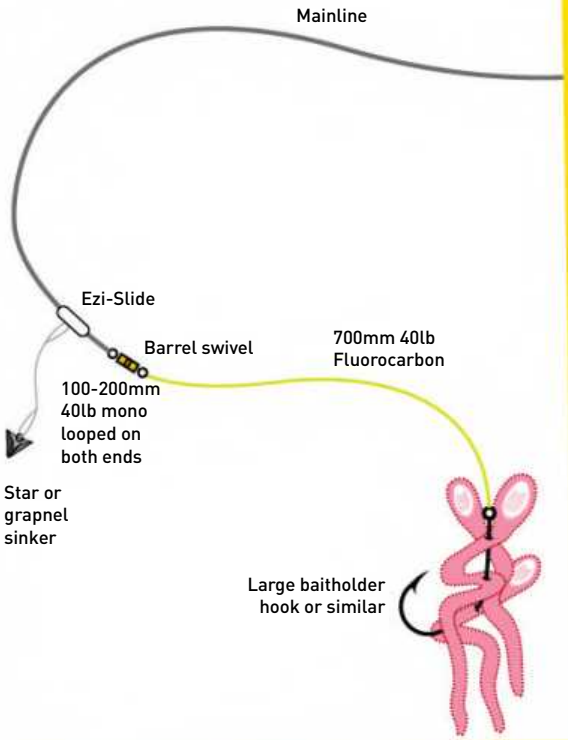
STEP 2 – Run a small bean sinker onto the leader and connect a good quality bait holder hook to the end of the leader. The bait holder is key to keeping this presentation looking good after casting so make sure this is the hook style you go with. Give yourself a good metre of leader or more for this one.

STEP 3 – Cut worm to suit hook size – about three times the length of the hook is good. About 10mm down from the head end, start threading onto the hook and then exit the worm so that the hooks eye embeds in the worm. This should mean the only part of the hook exposed is the point and you'll have a section at the top and the bottom where the worm will be wriggling freely – this will drive fish wild. The bait holder barbs should keep the hook well in place without the need for a half hitch around the top of the hook.



FISH WHERE?

Anywhere a worm is likely to be found. In the estuaries, this means around sand and mud flats. Worms often share the same area as yabbies so look for those flats with yabbie holes and you should be in the game.



BUNCH ON THE BEACH

One of the great lovers of a beach worms is the silver ghost, the mulloway. Arguably the most prized fish from the beach and also one of the biggest, even the largest of jewfish are strangely partial to a feed of beach worms. The key is to provide them with a big bait.

STEP 1 – On your main line, feed on an Ezi Slider (as pictured) and then connect the main line to a barrel swivel. On to the clip at the bottom of the Ezy Slider, loop a small section of mono (about 100-200mm) and then using another loop at the other end, loop onto a star or grapnel sinker..

STEP 2 – Attach a leader of around 40lb to the swivel and run down about 700mm and attach a hook. Some anglers will insist on a longshank but with this rig, you're bunching the worms up so you can also use a suicide hook or something similar. These tend to be stronger than longshanks which may be needed if that big jewie comes along. Don't be afraid to use a reasonable sized hook as jewies have big mouths and you'll be able to get more worm on your hook.

STEP 3 – Take a section of worm about 3 times the length of the hook. Thread onto the hook from the head end and working down. Exit the worm about 10mm down from the entry and then another 10mm down, thread more of the worm on the hook. Repeat this a few times so the worm is secure and there is still a good section hanging from the bottom of the hook. Thread more worms on the hook in the same way until you've filled the whole shank of the hook. What you should have is a good cluster of worms and a few dangling tails off the bottom.

FISH WHERE?

Find a gutter or sand bar close to where you caught them as this is most likely where the fish are going to be looking for a meal of beach worms.

PILCHARDS

Here's a bait that anything will eat. Pilchards are so versatile – you can drift them for flathead in the estuaries, fish them deep on the reefs and there's so many other options.

At many times of the year, it's possible to jig them live and use them fresh however this is not overly reliable so just try to source the best quality frozen bait you can get. If you are able to jig them, salt them down and cryovac them and store them in the fridge (not freezer – they should last a couple of months like this) – this way you'll have a tough, top quality bait for next time you're out.

TUNA CUBE

You'll be going a long way offshore to fish for most tuna yet when you get there, the simplest of techniques are often the best. Cubing pilchards for tuna is about as easy as it gets as long as you follow a couple of simple rules.

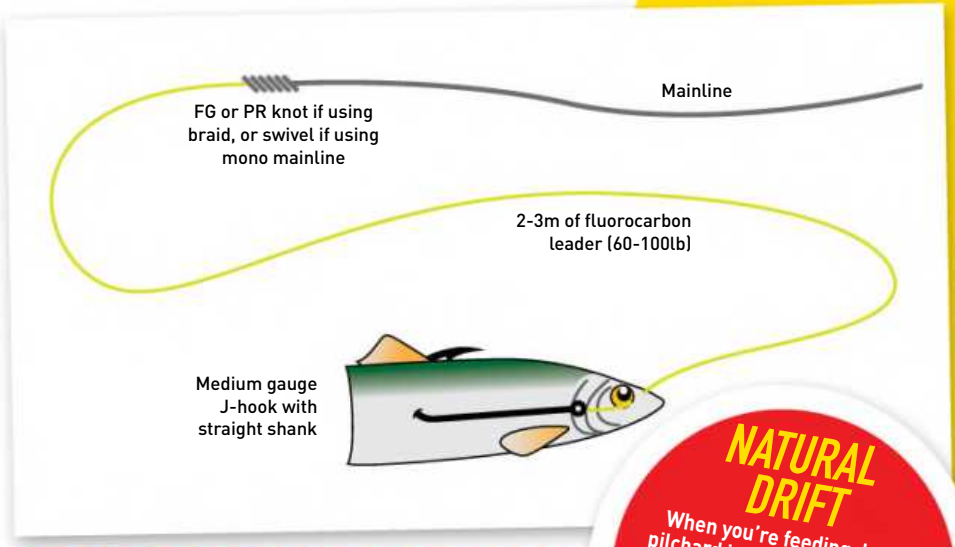
Use the lightest leaders you can – between 60-100lb fluorocarbon is good, adjust this to suit the species and the size of fish in the area.

A little often – small cubes of pilchards in a constant stream is the best way to keep tuna feeding below the boat. As soon as one cube drifts down and out of sight, flick another in. If you have fish right up at the back of the boat and feeding hard, you may need to up the rate a bit to keep them there.

STEP 1 – If using braided main line, try to avoid the use of a swivel as tuna have great eyesight. Instead, use a quality braid to mono knot such as an FG to connect the leader size of your choice. If you have fish at the boat and they're not eating your bait, downsize the leader until they do.
If using mono main line, you'll need a swivel so use a small profile swivel of high quality and a strong knot to join such as a Uni or a Nail knot.

STEP 2 –Connect your chosen hook to the end of the leader. There's no need for any sinker here as you want your bait to sink naturally with the cube trail. Generally a straight shanked j-hook is the go as they will conceal themselves better in the bait than a circle would.

STEP 3 – Cut the best quality pilchards (the one's that aren't broken or squashed) in half. Take the hook through the eye of the bait (without removing the eye) – all the way through until the leader threads through as well and then take the hook point back through one side of the pilchard and out the other. The hook should lay flat along the bait.



NATURAL DRIFT

When you're feeding down a pilchard in a cube trail, it's very important to let the bait sink without any pressure on the main line so it sinks at the same rate as the berley. If there is any difference between the two, the tuna will be suss on it.

FISH WHERE?

First step is to find where the tuna are congregated. Sea surface temperature charts will help with this as will a chat to some people in the know. Often the best way is to troll lures until you find the fish and then set up a cube trail of pilchards.

ROCK SPINNING

Spinning pilchards from the rocks is a technique that has been used for an age and is still just as effective now as it always was. The top species targeted here are tailor and salmon but there's a host of other species that will jump on the bandwagon.

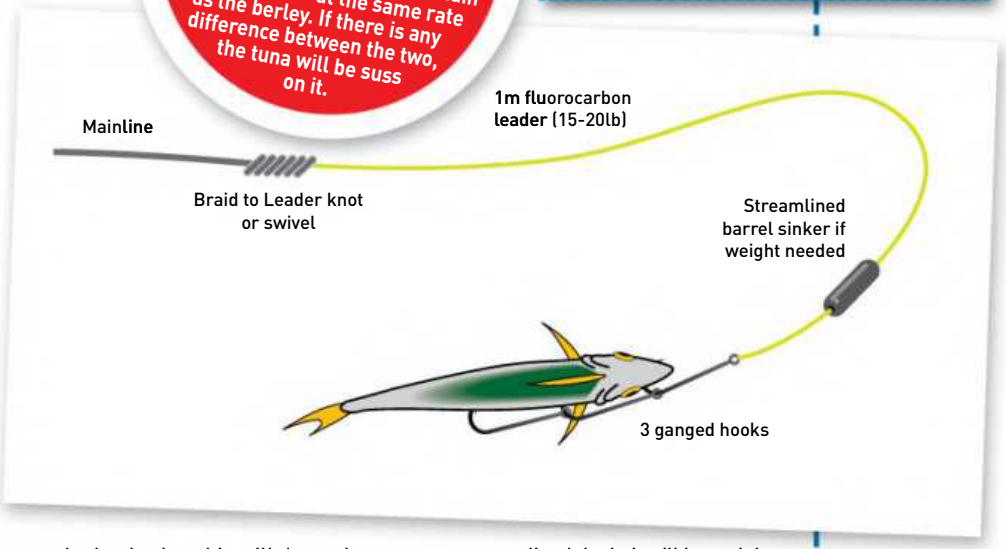
As mentioned above, use salted pillies for this one. The constant casting and retrieving can destroy a soft pilchard very quickly and the last thing you want to do is spend more time rigging than retrieving.

Look for areas with a bit of wash and a bit of clean water. Cast to the edges of the wash and vary your retrieve speeds to cover different depths.

STEP 1 – Attach a leader of around 15-20lb to your main line using either a braid to mono knot or a quality swivel and give yourself about a metre of leader.

STEP 2 – Attach a set of three ganged hooks onto your leaders end. You may need to also add a small barrel sinker onto the leader but this will depend on how deep you want your bait to get.

STEP 3 – To rig the pillie, line the gang hooks up against the bait so that the top hook (closest to the leader) will come out through the baits nose. Some people pin this first hook though the eye but the further forward you can get this hook, the more streamlined the bait will be and the better it will swim.
Pierce the first hook horizontally through the nose and then proceed to pin the other two hooks through the side of the bait. If fishing for tailor, it's ok to have the hook points embedded in the bait however if fishing for species less toothy, try to keep the hooks exposed.



FISH WHERE?

The best place to troll a live slimey is around the outside edges of other slimy schools. This way it looks to the predators like a baitfish has been separated from the school and therefore, an easy target.

GARFISH





Mackerel can't resist a trolled garfish

Garfish are a top bait for big predatory fish and there are certain species that simply can't refuse a well rigged live or dead gar. The landbased game guys fishing the northern stones for longtail tuna know just how valuable a live garfish is, as does anyone looking to troll up some mackerel on the reefs.

Garfish are relatively easy to catch – it's most commonly done by using a tiny hook and a small piece of prawn or bread. This can be fished unweighted or under a float and is best done on the sand flats or around jetties. A little bit of berley is the key to getting them fired up.

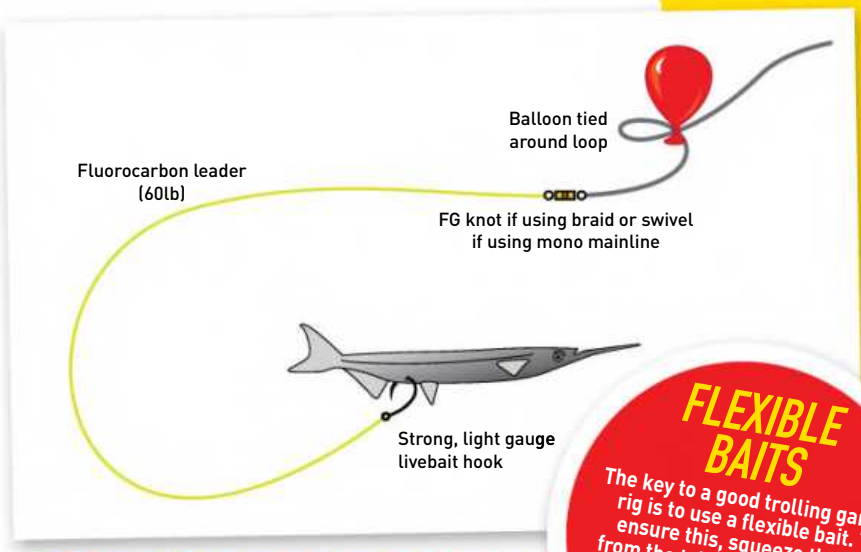
LBG LONGTAIL

There are baits and then there are best baits. Garfish are highly regarded as the ultimate bait when chasing longtail tuna and mackerel from the stones and if you're lucky enough to have seen a big pod of tuna come through on a school of sea gar, you'll understand just how much they love these fish. You can have a bunch of great baits in the water like yellowtail and slimey mackerel but when they're fixated on gar, everything else will be snubbed!

STEP 1 – Connect an abrasive resistant leader of around 60lb and 3-4 metres to your main line via an FG knot or something similar. The FG knot allows you to wind the leader onto the reel if needed towards the end of the fight.

STEP 2 –On the end of the leader, tie an appropriate livebait hook for the job. Most LBG fisho's prefer to use j-hooks however there is a growing trend to use circles. Whatever your hook choice is, make it light gauge yet strong enough to handle a long fight. Heavy hooks will weigh the garfish down and eventually kill it – you want it to remain as active as possible.

STEP 3 – Hook the garfish on the underside, just behind the anal fin. They seem to swim much better this way as it forces them to swim on the surface. Finally, in your mainline just above the leader knot, make a small loop and tie a blown up balloon around the loop. Drop your bait in and allow it to swim wide of the rocks. When a fish takes the bait, it will easily pull the loop through the balloon knot without feeling any resistance.



FLEXIBLE BAITS

The key to a good trolling garfish rig is to use a flexible bait. To ensure this, squeeze the gar from the tail right up to the gills to pop the meat away from the backbone. This makes them far more flexible and the action that much better!

FISH WHERE?

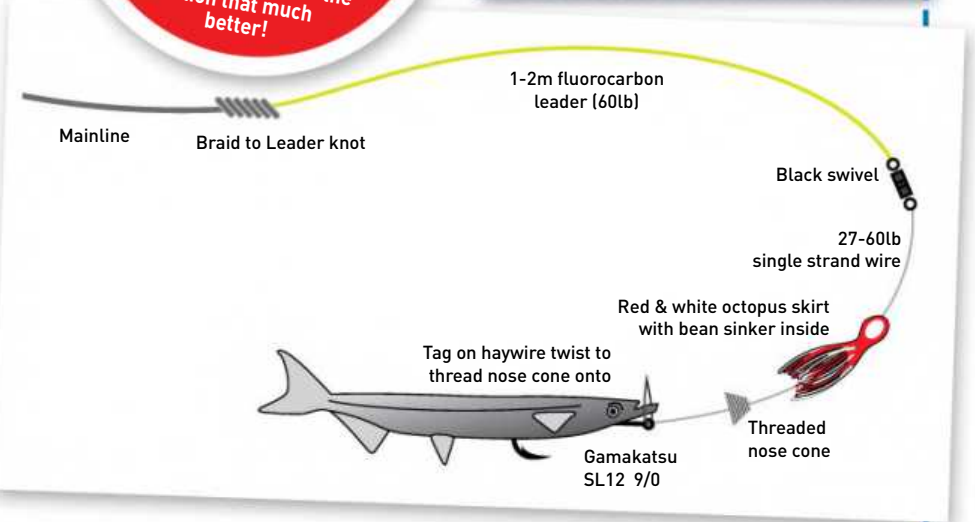
Breakwalls, rock ledges and anywhere else that longtail tuna are known to pass by. Try to find landbased locations that jut out into deeper water and receive plenty of current.

MACKEREL TROLLING

Just as garfish are loved by longtail tuna, they are equally favoured by mackerel and also other pelagic species such as marlin. Boat fisho's have the luxury of being mobile (rather than LBG's mentioned above) so to use this to your advantage and rig the garfish to be trolled.

For this rig, use freshly caught dead gar for the best results but if these can't be caught, quality frozen baits will work also.

STEP 1 – Connect a length of around 1 metre of 27-60lb single strand wire to a suitable hook via a Haywire twist. A great hook for this is a 9/0 Gamakatsu SL12. When you do the Haywire twist, leave the tag end on the wire as this will secure the bait when you're done. Feed a small bait cone and an octopus skirt with a bean sinker inside the head onto the wire so they run down to the hook and then attach wire to your mainline via a black swivel.



FISH WHERE?

Any offshore reefs that mackerel haunt. The beauty of this rig is you can troll reasonably fast so you can cover plenty of ground to find the fish.

STEP 2 – Next, break the bill off the gar and line the hook up against the bait so that the tag end of the Haywire twist is in line with the baits nose. This will tell you where the hook point needs to come out so take note. Pass the hook point under the gills and feed down through the belly of the gar and bring the point back out through the centre of the belly where you have just marked.

STEP 3 – Take the tag end from the Haywire and feed up through the mouth of the gar and out the top. You then use your bait cone to twist onto this tag end to secure the bait in place. Once you've done this, slide your octopus skirt down onto the bait and you're good to go. The bean sinker inside the skirt will keep the bait from skipping on the surface.



Pipi's are easily harvested on some beaches. Be mindful of your bag limits as they are heavily regulated

PIPIS

While they're one of the go to baits on the beach (and this is certainly a great spot to use them), pipis are also dynamite baits for most light tackle species wherever you choose to use them. In the estuaries, they are brilliant bream baits while on the beach, just about anything will happily pick up a free meal of pipis.

They are quite easy to find on most beaches and they keep well if they are looked after.

ON THE BEACH

By far the best option to fish a pipi is right where you harvested it. They are a great bait in the surf and coupled with a little berley trail, you'll soon have fish coming in on a regular basis.

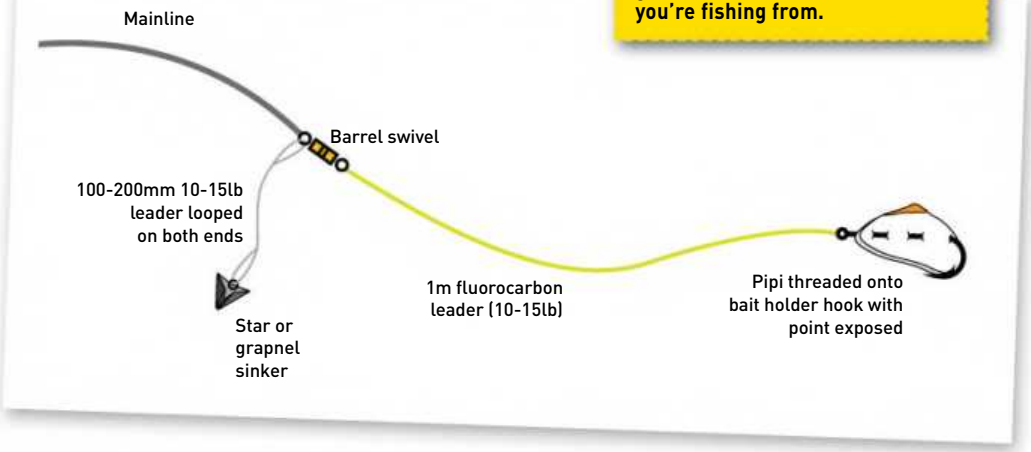
STEP 1 – Connect around 1 metre of 10-15lb fluorocarbon leader to your main line via a small barrel swivel. On the other end of this, attach a small bait holder style hook (of suitable size to you target species).

STEP 2 – From your swivel, run a 100-200mm length of the same sized leader off to a grapnel or star sinker. This rig is designed to keep the bait close to your sinker so you have more sensitivity under a tight line.

STEP 3 – Feeding the pipi onto the hook is as simple as threading the hook through the bait multiple times until the bait works its way up the shank. Leave a small amount of the hook point exposed for the best hook up rate.

FISH WHERE?

Basically anywhere on the beach where there is a good gutter or other feature likely to hold fish. It's always best if the baits are gathered from the same location you're fishing from.



BERLEYING BREAM

Another great spot to use pipi's is around rock walls for bream as the bream in these areas are concentrating on mussel type baits that are constantly being washed off the rocks by the pounding swell. Couple the bait with a natural sink and a small amount of berley and you've got a deadly technique for some big breakwall bream.

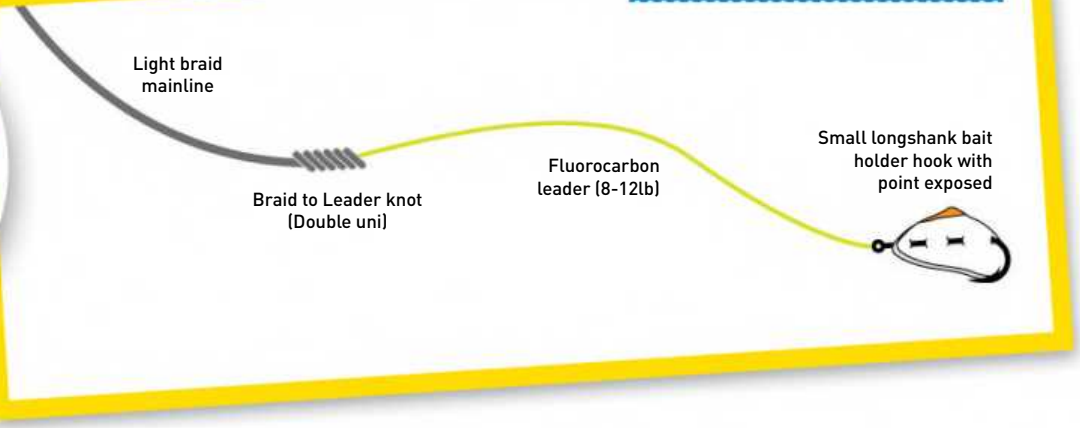
STEP 1 – Use a light fluorocarbon leader for this rig as you need the bait to sink easily but at the same time, don't go too light as it can be rough country. Probably around 8-12lb is a good option and connect to the mainline via a good braid to mono knot.

STEP 2 – Attach the leader to a small bait holder similar to what you would use for any other baiting application, just don't go too large.

STEP 3 – Thread the bait onto the hook multiple times to work the bait up the shank of the hook. For an extra tough bait, you can half hitch your leader around the top of the pipi and the eye of the hook to hold it in place. Then you simply fish the bait unweighted, back into a berley trail and watch the loose line keenly for any takes.

FISH WHERE?

Breakwalls, bridges or any other areas where there is likely to be mussel growth and schooling bream. This rig should always be fished with a mixed berley for best results. Bread, prawn heads, pipi shells and other items will work a treat.



STORE 'EM

Pipi's can be packed and frozen for use at a later date and due to their tough skin, they don't seem to go as soft as other frozen baits. Cryovac them and freeze them in amounts that you will use in a single session.

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Saltwater Reels

AZORES

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MSS

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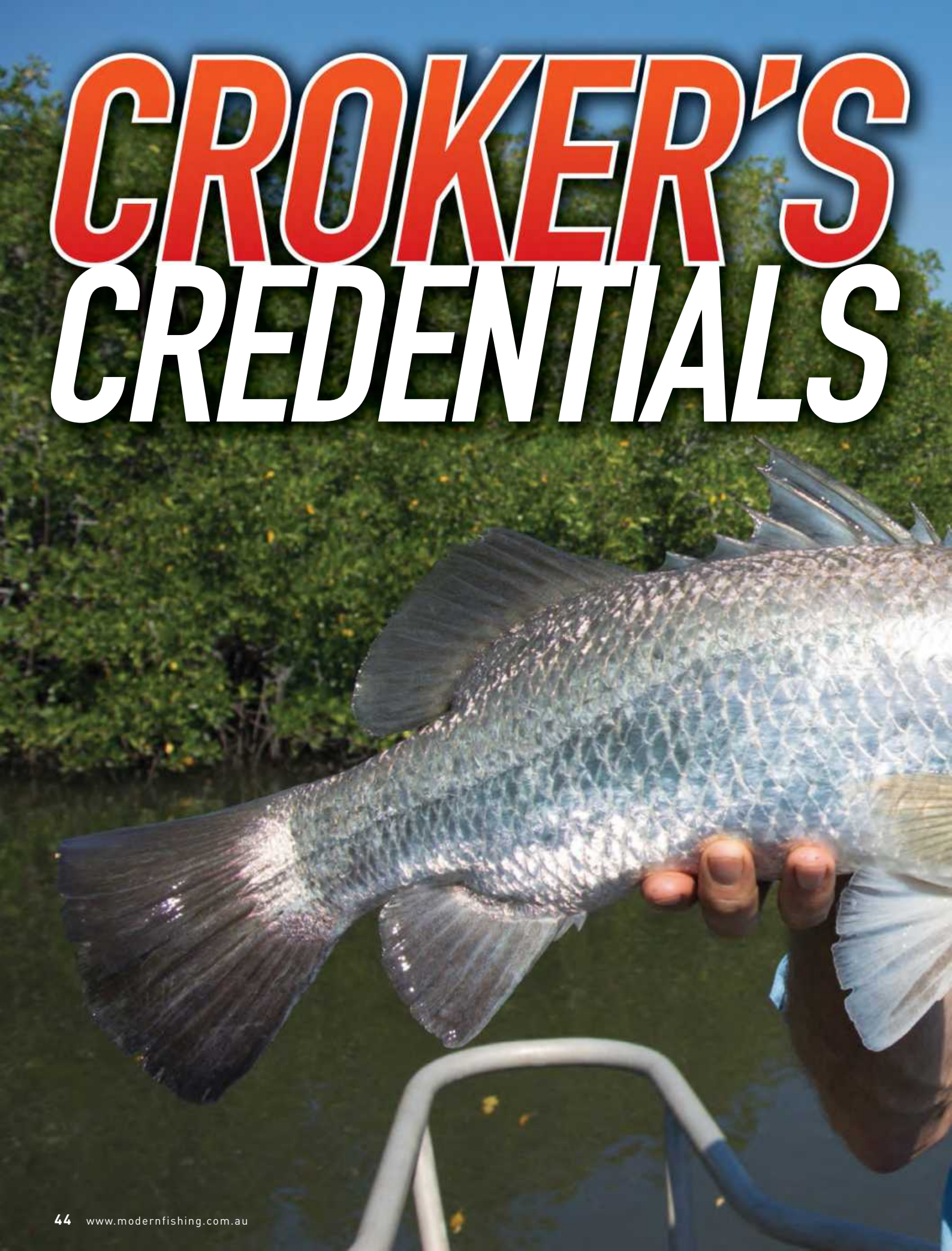


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CROKER'S CREDENTIALS





Andy McGovern checks out Jarbu lodge on Croker Island and reports back of fish filled snags and an abundance of tough bluewater species

WORDS AND IMAGES BY ANDY MCGOVERN


Steve Long with a cracking salty that gave him a few heart stopping moments in the snags

For many Aussie anglers the dream of fishing a remote location in Northern Australia is a once in a lifetime experience. I have been fortunate to have fished many areas in this vast region over the past three decades, however my most recent adventure was without question the most exhilarating and memorable for many reasons. The main purpose of the trip was to let my son, Mitch, have a taste of the "real" northern Australia. By this I meant experiencing the heat, the humidity, the bugs, the wildlife, and the landscape, but most of all the fishing that is available across this immense expanse of our continent. Also, this was his 16th birthday present and what better excuse for his old man to get to have a cast or two along the way. After many months researching different lodges, guides, and options, we settled on Jarbu Lodge on Croker Island in the Northern Territory, managed by owner/operator Robert Hunt.

"We both agreed that the mouth-watering creek fishing on its own would be enough to warrant a return trip"

RESEARCHING YOUR DESTINATION

With such a big time and money outlay, to undertake a northern Australia trip, I wanted to ensure I thoroughly researched all options. I spent 8 or 9 months looking at various websites, independent fishing lodge reviews, and various blogs or forums. I then contacted Garry Barmby, Director of Angling Adventures. Garry is synonymous in Australian fishing circles and started Angling Adventures over 30 years ago as a one-stop shop for traveling fishermen. I outlined what my budget was and what I was after in regards to the trip. Garry provided me with several options, giving an honest and up front appraisal of what was on offer. In the end it was a simple choice to select Jarbu and in hindsight I could have saved myself a stack of time and gone direct to Angling Adventures in the first place. The lodge, the food, the fishing, and the guides, were exactly as Garry had described and both Mitch and I couldn't have been happier with the high quality customer service provided by all the team at Angling Adventures. If you are interested in booking a trip to Jarbu Lodge then contact Angling Adventures. They are the sole agent for Jarbu and will take care of all your travel requirements. For more information contact them on **1800 033 094** or visit their website at **www.anglingadventures.net.au**


The locals don't think much of them but Andy was happy with the big Pikey Bream

The quality and quantity of the mangrove jacks in the creeks was impressive. This average sized jack fell for a Rapala Clackin' Rap

WHERE IS CROKER?

Croker Island is situated 210km north east of Darwin in the Arafura Sea. The island is 15km across at its widest point and measures over 40kms long. Jarbu Lodge is located on the west coast of the island and only a few hundred metres from the air strip.

CRAZY CREEK CAPERS

It is no secret that chasing piscatorial predators in northern creeks is close to the top of my preferred styles of fishing. Unfortunately, it is not something I get to do too often, so when I get the chance, I jump at it. Plus, I know the types of fishing Mitch enjoys and casting in tight situations is one he gets a huge kick out of. Many times I had told him that as good as catching bass, golden perch, EPs, and bream from snag-riddled waterways is, nothing compares to the raw pulling power and speed of the finned beasts of the north. Barra, estuary cod, threadfin salmon, fingermark bream, tarpon, whaler sharks, and my personal favourite, the mangrove jack are all species that would strip the skin and scales off our poor southern species when it comes to fighting characteristics.

Croker Island has a plethora of creeks all within a relatively short run from the lodge and many of these you could spend the entire day fishing. Rob has also gained permission and has access to many creeks on the mainland. These creeks are rarely, if ever, fished due to their remoteness, so the quality and quantities of species at times can be staggering. Some of these creeks are only small and can be fished thoroughly in a few hours, whereas others are a labyrinth of drains, minor creeks, and run off areas, which you could explore for days on end. Without sound knowledge of these systems it would be easy to get lost. We spent an entire day in one mid-sized creek, fishing right through a full tidal cycle. The variety of species landed was only matched by the variety of fishing styles we applied during the day. Casting accuracy was still paramount and lures needed to land right next to or in the snags to extract fish. This was particularly the case when the sun was out and through the middle parts of the day. Working lures across the edge of shadows and dirty water lines also proved a productive way to elicit a strike. Mitch and I agreed that the mouth-watering creek fishing on its own would be enough to warrant a return trip.





Soft vibes proved highly successful on all species



Keeping an eye out for hidden drains and creeks proved a worthwhile exercise in the creeks



Andy finally landed a threadie after Mitch had shown him the way by catching 7

EXTRAS (FOOD)

There are no facilities to purchase snacks at Croker, so it is a good idea to take some extras with you. We took some nuts, muesli bars, and a couple of packets of mixed lollies to have on the boat as an extra to the catered food.

BLUEWATER MADNESS

One of the huge advantages of fishing out of Jarbu Lodge is that you are never far from the fish. At many of the northern locations I have fished over the past three decades, generally it is a long run in the boat to get to the quality blue water fishing. A forty minute, to in excess of an hour run is the norm in the majority of these locations. At Jarbu some of the best blue water fishing action we experienced was literally within sight of the lodge. Our last day at the lodge was a short three-hour session before we had to board our flight back to Darwin, and I have to say it was a session that will live long in my memory. As Taps (our guide) pushed the boat out past a couple of small shallow reefs we were greeted with leaden skies and a sprinkling of birds working only a few hundred metres to the east. We decided to drop a couple of shallow running minnows over the side and troll,



Andy looks awfully pleased with his first magnificently coloured blue fin trevally

while we worked our way slowly towards the cluster of birds. We figured we would hedge our bets and maybe a chance of hooking one of the reef dwellings species that call the rubbly, broken bottom home. As we moved closer to the action the number of our feathered friends seemed to double, and then triple, the closer we got, while the mannerisms of the birds shifted from casual circling, to full on frantic dive bombing into the water. Watching the birds is one thing, however, the skills in distinguishing the difference between birds simply circling and searching for bait, to "active" birds about to commence dive bombing into the water as baitfish are pushed closer to the surface, are a much unvalued talent. With some on the water experience it will become simple to distinguish between the two modes of sea birds, which will greatly enhance your fishing results.

TACKLE BOX

With the variety of species and styles of fishing available at Croker, what lures to take can be daunting. Below is a broad selection, which will cover most options;

- 6 - 10 x trolling minnows – Rapala's and Halco's – to cover all blue water and reef species
- 6 - 8 x mid-sized poppers – for mackerel, queenies, and trevally;
- 6 - 8 x pre-rigged soft plastic shads – these are a cheap option to throw at big trevally around shallow bommies and work equally well in the large river entrances;
- 8 x soft plastic vibes – for jacks, barra, threadfin salmon, in the creeks;
- 15 - 20 x Hard bodied minnows – take a mix of diving depths and colours to cover all options inside the creeks and around the flats; and
- 8 - 12 packets of soft plastics and a variety of jig head weights

Alternatively, lures are available from the lodge on a pay if you lose basis.



There was plenty of wildlife roaming around the lodge. Goannas, wild pigs and Timor Ponies were common encounters



There are some productive land based options only a few hundred metres from the lodge. We fished several mornings and evenings landing barra, blue salmon, trevally, and queenies

Schools of Queenies and brassy trevally were often mixed in together and made for exciting casting



"What followed was one of the most intense fishing sessions I have experienced"

The tell-tale slashes of Queenies, brassy, and golden trevally indicated that the predators had pushed the helpless baitfish to the surface. Simultaneously, the birds had begun that relentless diving attack into the surface film. The boat made a slight change of direction so we didn't troll straight through the middle of the feeding school and potentially put them down. Both rods loaded up under the weight of quality fish. As can often be the case, I pulled the hooks on my fish during the first blistering run while Mitch stayed solid. I quickly retrieved and swapped rods with a popper outfit I had set up for such an occasion. While Mitch worked his fish closer to the boat, a small pod of Queenies began to erupt only a few metres from the bow. I launched the Halco Rooster popper 15 metres past the fish and immediately engaged the reel to commence my retrieve. Third rotation of the reel and a monster Queenie engulfed my offering.

What followed was one of the most intense fishing sessions I have experienced. We worked out we basically had a fish hooked up every 6 minutes for those three hours. As the schooling fish were moving around fairly quickly we decided to only troll one rod and have two others rigged and ready to fire casts at either fish that "shadowed" another hook fish or if fish began busting up within casting distance. This set up allowed us to remain mobile and flexible so that we didn't have to worry about trolled lures becoming tangled if we needed to make an abrupt change of direction. With the other two rods - we rigged one with a popper and the other with a pre-rigged soft plastic shad. The SP shads were used effectively on "shadowing fish" if they trailed a few metres under the hooked fish and the popper rod came into its own when fish were working the surface. The popper rod certainly added an element of excitement with some spectacular surface strikes within metres of the boat.

REEF RECON

Along with blue fin trevally, one species that has eluded me over many northern ventures is the black jewfish. After landing a bunch of barracuda and small mackerel the morning before we had plenty of fresh baits for an afternoon session bottom bashing the reef. The other bonus when bait fishing reefs is you just don't know what is going to turn up next. The afternoon session resulted in 17 new species for Mitch and I, including numerous unstoppable creatures on 30lb braid. We landed plenty of fish, which included a stack of black jewies up to 92cm, and although not the big one we were after, they were still very satisfying captures. We hooked numerous unstoppable fish, including some big jewies, however, our tackle just wasn't heavy enough to turn them. For me the highlight of the reef sessions was a thumping golden snapper which measured 88cm and was yet another fish that smashed my previous PB. As is generally the case, where fish activity increased around the reefs, the men in grey suits moved in so it was time for a change. We switched over to jigging, opting for large soft plastics and feather jigs, which turned up a few more fish, however the sharks were too thick and most fish, were coming to the boat with huge bite marks out of them or with a trailing pack of toothy, dark shapes under them. All was not lost as there was plenty of bait moving past the reef systems and with them a plethora of pelagics, so we spent the remainder of the afternoon re-packing line onto reels as drags were tested to the max under pressure from brassy trevally, mackerel, and queenfish.



Black Jewie were also common around the reefs and fell for baits and jigs


Mitch getting stretched by a big brassy trevally

OUTFITS

We took three outfit with us to Jarbu. These outfits covered all fishing styles and worked equally well casting in creeks, bottom bouncing baits, and trolling blue water.

- Ryobi Slam 4000 (30lb Cortland RZ-8 PE Braid) matched to a Gary Howard "Aussie Traveller" rod
- Quantum Exo 4000 (matched to a Gary Howard "Aussie Traveller" Rod
- Quantum Exo baitcaster (30lb Rovex Airstrike braid) matched to a Nitro

In addition I took a spare reel, a Quantum Cabo 4000 reel with 20lb braid. Whatever your take on brands, a similar kit to this should see you covering all the bases.



One of the many highlights of the trip was Mitch being dealt to for over 15 minutes from the relentless doggedness of this 98cm brassy trevally

"Mitch and I landed a total of 227 fish, consisting of 31 species in just four days!"



Golden Trevally are one of many species that patrol the shallow reefs and bommies near the lodge



The brag wall at Jarbu where angler's hang their lures that have taken trophy fish

RATE IT

The meals at Jarbu Lodge are simple, big, and wholesome. Mitch and I opted to have our fish (mainly mangrove jack) cooked up each night, even though Rob offered turkey breast, roast lamb, and steak on different occasions. I'm not a huge fish eater but in my opinion mangrove jack stands alone at the top of the table fish list available in this country. A fresh fillet of jack is only equal with the delicious Moa Moa from New Zealand when it comes to culinary delights. Accommodation is eco-tourism bungalow style huts built on platforms, with two single beds in each and two big electric ceiling fans. They are clean, comfortable, cool, and most importantly, they keep the bugs out.

If you are looking for a 5 star, air-conditioned fishing lodge with all the bells and whistles then Jarbu Lodge is not the place for you. However, if you want the "real" northern Australia experience, nestled in a remote location with breath taking beauty and an abundance of wildlife, then I can't recommend Jarbu Lodge highly enough. Throw in huge numbers of hard fighting fish, all willing to take a lure in a variety of locations, coupled with the fact they are all within a short distance from the lodge, and personally I believe you have the perfect fishing adventure of a life time. Mitch and I are already planning a return trip for his 18th!

NOTE: Andy and Mitch both fished Jarbu Lodge as fully paying customers.

THE STATS DON'T LIE

In many scenarios, statistics can paint a slightly distorted picture of actual events. However, in the case of our recent trip to Jarbu Lodge, the final tally is quite staggering for only two anglers over four days. In this case the stats are a true reflection of not only the quality, but also the quantity of fish landed.

A total of 227 fish consisting of 31 species!

A few facts that stood out for me was the quality of the queenfish which averaged just over a metre in length (best fish was Mitch's monster of 121cm, beat my best for the trip by 3cm). GTs averaged 85cm with the best going 98cm (although not in the same realm as some of those behemoths for the GBR and beyond, GTs this size still worked us over on comparatively light spin tackle). The numbers of quality Jacks in the creeks, and according to Rob we didn't actually fish a few of his favourite Jack creeks. After returning, I chased up a few other anglers who had fished Jarbu, and what was most amazing is that these numbers and variety are a standard trip to Jarbu Lodge.

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SHAKE 'N' BAKE

Rory Benn-Clibborn spills the beans on a subtle technique that is proving deadly on a shutdown impoundment bite

WORDS BY RORY BENN-CLIBBORN
IMAGES BY DAVE WOLTSCHENKO

I have been challenging myself for a long time to learn more about targeting the humble, Aussie golden perch (Macquaria Ambigua). By experimenting with various tackle and fishing techniques across all four seasons of the year at a huge variety of locations, I have come across one technique that has really changed the way I fish for goldens. This technique has proven very successful, especially when the water is cold and the fish are suffering from a serious case of lock jaw. The technique has been aptly named the "Shake 'n' Bake" and has accounted for many quality fish when other techniques have failed miserably.

Growing up in Canberra, I had myriad still water ponds and creeks that were just a short bike ride away from home, most of which hold some great populations of goldens. Naturally, chasing GP's quickly became an obsession that to this day plays on my mind constantly. As a light tackle junkie, I have always found chasing these fish extremely rewarding. Nothing beats the zing of a Shimano Sustain 1000FG burning away as a big golden smashes your lure and runs with it. Golden perch can be seriously hard to trick into eating a lure at times. I have spent many, many hours on the water trying to figure out the recipe for success. However, I still find myself scratching my head on certain occasions wondering why they just won't bite.

I am yet to find the exact reason for their well-known "shut-down" periods; there are just far too many possibilities. With many years of experimentation, thought and consideration of the subject though, I have gathered a few handy tips and techniques that have changed the way that I target these stunning Aussie natives. I hope by sharing the Shake 'n' Bake technique with you, you'll be able to put it into practice and see the benefits of extreme finesse fishing for goldens the next time you find yourself struggling to get the bites.



Michael Watson and one of the first Shake 'n' Bake victims



Dark coloured blades seem to be the most effective



Small blades are usually the lure of choice but the technique does work with larger vibes too



The fish are usually hooked well with the assist hooks

TOP 5 LURES

- Ecogear ZX Blade
- Savage Gear 3D manic Crab
- Pro Lure Live Yabby
- Cranka Crab
- Savage Gear 3D Craw



"The Shake 'n' Bake has accounted for many quality fish when other techniques have failed miserably"

PICKY EATERS

Lake Windamere in NSW is the perfect proving ground for developing new techniques and experimenting with your tackle and presentations. While the lake is extremely well known for being a very consistent producer of good numbers of sizeable goldens, the lake does still suffer through periods of slow and almost non-existent bites. On one occasion in late winter, my good mate Michael Watson and I found ourselves in that scenario – it was dead! It was actually the coldest water temperature I had ever fished at 'Windy' (10 degrees) and the fish were extremely stubborn.

We arrived at around 3:00pm on the Friday and quickly jumped in the boat to investigate the conditions. I was the only person to receive any bites for the afternoon and they all failed to connect. The bites were timid and short lived so I spent that night back at the cabin, stewing over in my head what the problem was and trying to come up with a solution for conversion.

I knew that the fish were present, because we spent the majority of the afternoon working various rock and clay points that I knew on most occasions held good numbers of fish. Sure enough, the sounders told the story - there were plenty of fish holding in these locations and they were obviously there for a reason. They were holding in small groups, close to the bottom and with some close observation, I also noticed we were finding larger numbers of fish on the points and slopes that were more visibly eroded by the vast networks of yabbie excavations. This led me to the theory that these fish may be concentrating their efforts on eating yabbies. Due to the cold water, the yabbies become more lethargic so these fish were not going to be interested in eating a larger, fast moving lure outside of their strike zone – the lure needs to be in their face and behaving just like a bite-sized lethargic yabby.

THROW A SHRIMP ON THE BARBIE

As we sat and stewed over the days efforts with a nice cold beer, I began thinking about our technique and lure presentation. Mick was employing a fairly standard hop and drop with his 50mm vibe and failed to see even the slightest attempt at a bite. I however was fishing a dumbed down version of the hop and drop technique with short slow hops, very long pauses on the bottom and plenty of Squidgy S-Factor bloodworm scent. I was originally fishing an Atomic Semi Hardz Vib 60 in Muddy Prawn, generally a proven lure during good bite periods, but on this occasion it did not excite the fish enough for a fully committed strike. I remember taking particular notice of the fact that I only managed to get bites while the lure was sitting dead still, at this point I knew it wasn't going to be an easy weekend of fishing, we were really going to have to work for the fish

"The movement should emulate a shut down yabbie slowly crawling along the bottom"

and this meant it was time to downsize everything and go for a much more finesse and representative approach. Immediately, the first lure choice that came to mind was the Ecogear ZX 35 – the perfect finesse yabby/shrimp imitation, doubled with some S-Factor Blood Worm scent. These lures are absolutely dynamite on a huge variety of fish species, but golden perch especially.

With this epiphany, I quickly dug into my tackle-bag to find two brand new Ecogear ZX35s, some 3lb fluorocarbon leader and a black permanent marker. I tied an extra long leader of about two metres onto my 5lb Power Pro Bite Motion braid, the extra length in my leader would decrease any braid visibility within the fishes line of sight. I chose a Dark Night coloured Ecogear ZX35 and smothered the lure in blood worm scent ready for the morning. Using the black permanent texta, I coloured in the snap lock that attaches to the blade to further decrease the visibility of any un-natural looking elements. If the fish were going to be willing to eat our lures with commitment, we had to use everything we had to give the impression that these blades were really a tasty meal rather than a deadly sharp fish trap!

At dawn we hit the water and made our way to a place we call 'Zinger point', it's a large protruding rock and clay point, teeming with yabby holes. We had locked onto plenty of fish on the sounder the day before at Zinger Point, sitting in around 30 feet of water adjacent to a steep drop off. Instinctively we kicked the rear motor off well before arriving at the location and snuck in using the electric motor until we were close enough that we could use the wind to slowly move us past the school.

We hadn't even turned the sounder on yet and my first cast was a dead ringer. The lure must have landed right



Success! The Shake 'n' Bake paying off on a tough day



This technique works well around hard structure too



60cm's of fat GP. You don't need big lures to get the big fish

Multiple hook-ups when the bite is 'slow' is generally a good sign that the technique is effective





near the nose of an active fish, as when it reached the bottom, I felt a sharp twitch through my line. I looked over at Mick and said "they're already onto it!" - He turned around to witness my line twitching actively as I was dead sticking my rod. If you have ever witnessed a golden perch in a tank full of yabbies, you may have seen them attack the claws first. By grabbing the claws and shaking their head, they can occasionally dislodge the claws making a much easier meal and this is how they react to the assist hooks on a ZX blade.

When the bites stopped and my slack line returned to a smooth bow, I gently raised my rod tip to the two o'clock position and began shaking it back and forth very lightly. Through the slack line, waves of vibration are sent to the lure which creates micro movement, the ZX blades are perfect for this technique as the free swinging assist hooks and rubber tentacles wiggle with just the slightest of movements. I knew the fish was actively watching the lure, waiting for its chance to pounce and the smaller amount of movement I made would be less likely to spook the wary perch. As I mentioned earlier, I believed they were in tune to feeding on sluggish slow moving yabbies'. So by using this rod tip action, I was imparting the same action that a slow yabby would make if it was unaware that a big golden perch was stalking closely behind.

After around 5 seconds of the 'Shake' I lowered my hand allowing the slack line to once again create a gentle bow and let the lure 'Bake' dead still on the bottom again. Sure enough, within a few seconds of the 'Bake' I felt another sharp 'tick' and then a surge of solid weight powering through my braid. This was the critical moment that set yet another trend for the weekend, that surge of solid weight was the perfect time to set the hooks and 100% of the bites from the weekend only resulted in hookup when that solid weight was felt. This was the moment that the fish committed to actually eating the ZX blade rather than just toying with it. A successful hookup resulted in the first healthy fish landed for the trip; it was a hefty 560mm golden perch that was perfectly hooked in the corner of the jaw.

From here on in, it was all about the aptly named "Shake 'n' Bake" with several more fish landed in quick succession, the trip had turned from a very cold and frustrating expedition into an exciting and rewarding learning curve.



SHAKE 'N' BAKE – BREAKDOWN

- **Make a long cast past your target**
- **Let lure reach the bottom**
- **Keep slack line to minimize resistance**
- **Bake lure on bottom for 10 seconds**
- **Shake rod tip gently for 5 seconds**
- **Turn reel handle to pick up extra slack line while shaking**
- **Strike only when you feel the fishes full weight**

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

In late winter/early spring you can almost bet that an inland fishery will be tough going. With cold nights and mornings, the water temperatures will be lucky to break 12 degrees on the surface. Unless you have a consistent warm weather pattern for weeks before hand and a moderately warm winter you're going to have to pack for the worst and hope for the best. Here's what you should bring:

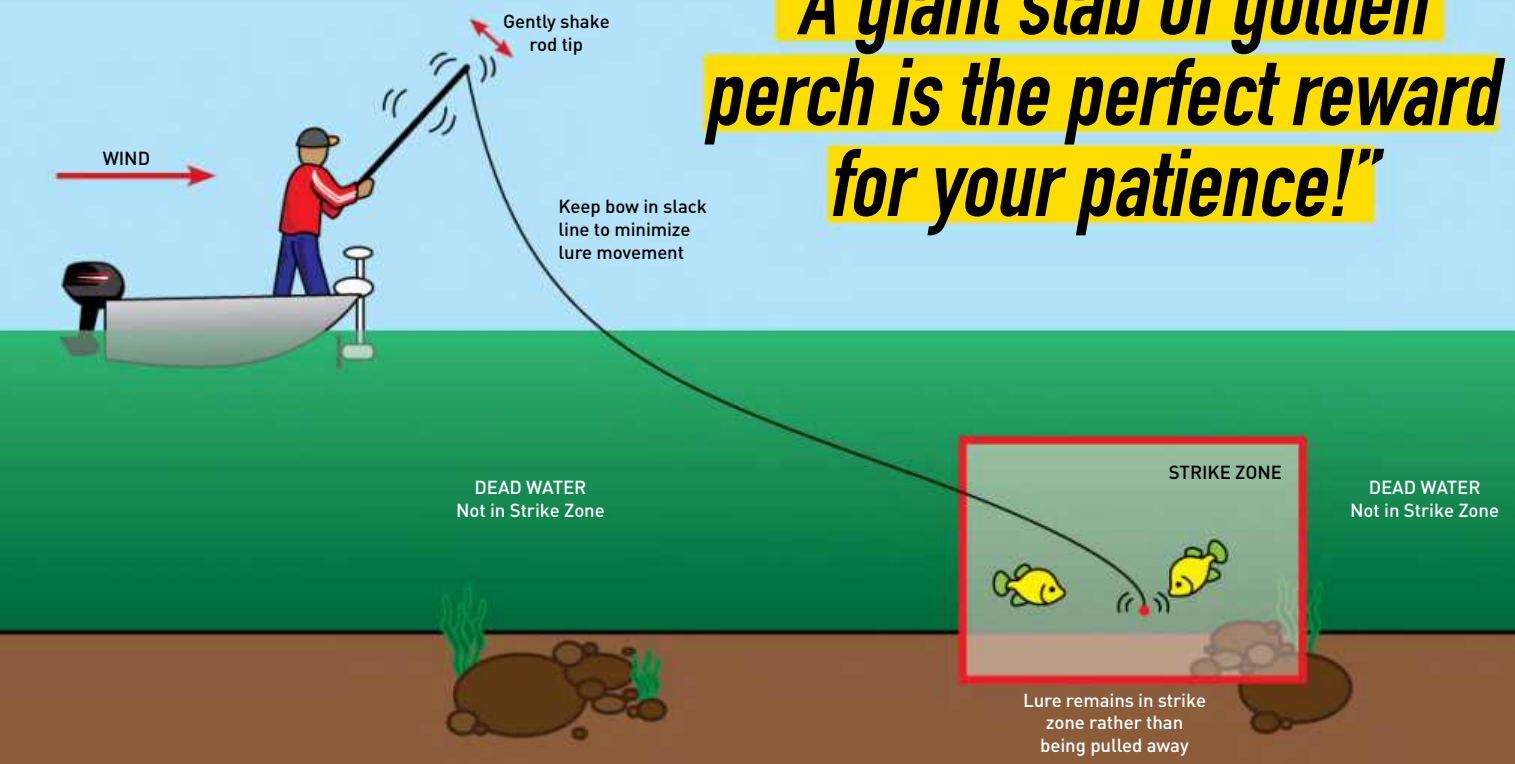
INGREDIENTS

- A light rod set-up such as a 7ft, 1-3kg spinning rod paired with a 1000 sized spinning reel.
- 3-6lb braided line and fluorocarbon leader.
- Handful of sinking lures including a range of blades, vibes and soft plastics.
- Lure Scent (preferably shrimp or bloodworm)
- Black permanent marker

PREPARATION

Finding the fish can be tricky. Weather conditions, water temperature and the location or abundance of certain food sources can determine on any day where the fish may be. The use of modern marine electronics has become a staple part of my perch fishing success. Being able to cover large areas and see just about everything below the surface has made finding the fish much easier. Slowly motoring past rocky points, clay and mud banks, broken rock walls and steep slopes should see you marking fish on your sounder regularly and these are perfect targets for the "Shake 'n' Bake". In winter and early spring look for fish in 25-40 feet of water.

"A giant slab of golden perch is the perfect reward for your patience!"



METHOD – CASTING AND RETRIEVING

For the "Shake 'n' Bake" give your lure as much time in the water as possible. A long cast of at least 30-40 feet is necessary. Position your boat in a way so that your cast lands just past your target. The target should be fish you have located using your sounder or a specific location such as a rocky point. Your boats drift should lead you toward your lure rather than working your lure back towards your boat. This means that your line can remain slack and the lure won't move too far from its original position. This is the key to success. The aim of the presentation is to keep that lure hanging right in front of the fish's face rather than being ripped away from them. Once your lure has reached the bottom, let it sit motionless ('bake') for up to 10 seconds. A lot of the strikes will come in those first 10 seconds so it pays to be patient. After 'baking', it's time to shake. Lift your rod tip up to the 2 o'clock position and gently quiver it for 5 seconds. As you do this, take up the slack line with one full turn of your reel handle and then stop. Allow your lure to sink back to the bottom and bake for another 5-10 seconds. Repeat this process.

THE PERFECT SHAKE

For this technique to work you need to quiver the rod very gently, thinking about the subtle action you are trying to create in the lure at the end of the slack line. You want the movement to emulate a shut down yabbie slowly crawling along the bottom and pausing. Your hand should shake so gently that you could balance an egg on top of it while you do it.



By adding scent, Rory was able to convert this fish. You gotta do all you can sometimes



The base of steep banks seem to hold good numbers of fish

BAKE 'TIL GOLDEN BROWN

A lot of your bites are going to come while the lure is sitting motionless or "baking".

You will be able to see or feel sharp flicks coming through your line as the fish attempts to shake off the imitation yabbies' claws. When you feel the first flick, drop your rod tip to minimalise resistance and wait. These flicks could continue for several seconds. When you feel tension build through the rod as the fish moves away with the lure in its mouth, strike gently with a short sharp upwards motion.

PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

The "Shake 'n' Bake" is a versatile technique that has proven successful targeting not only golden perch, but a wide range of other species. I have caught hundreds of golden and English perch, good bream and flathead and even some nice sized brown trout in the mountains. It works on all manner of species especially when the bites are hard to come by. This technique requires high levels of patience, but your persistence will pay off. When you're the only person on the boat catching fish, all your mates will be harassing you to figure out what you are doing differently. Tell them in the famous words of Ricky Bobby (Talladega Nights) – "Shake 'n' Bake baby"!

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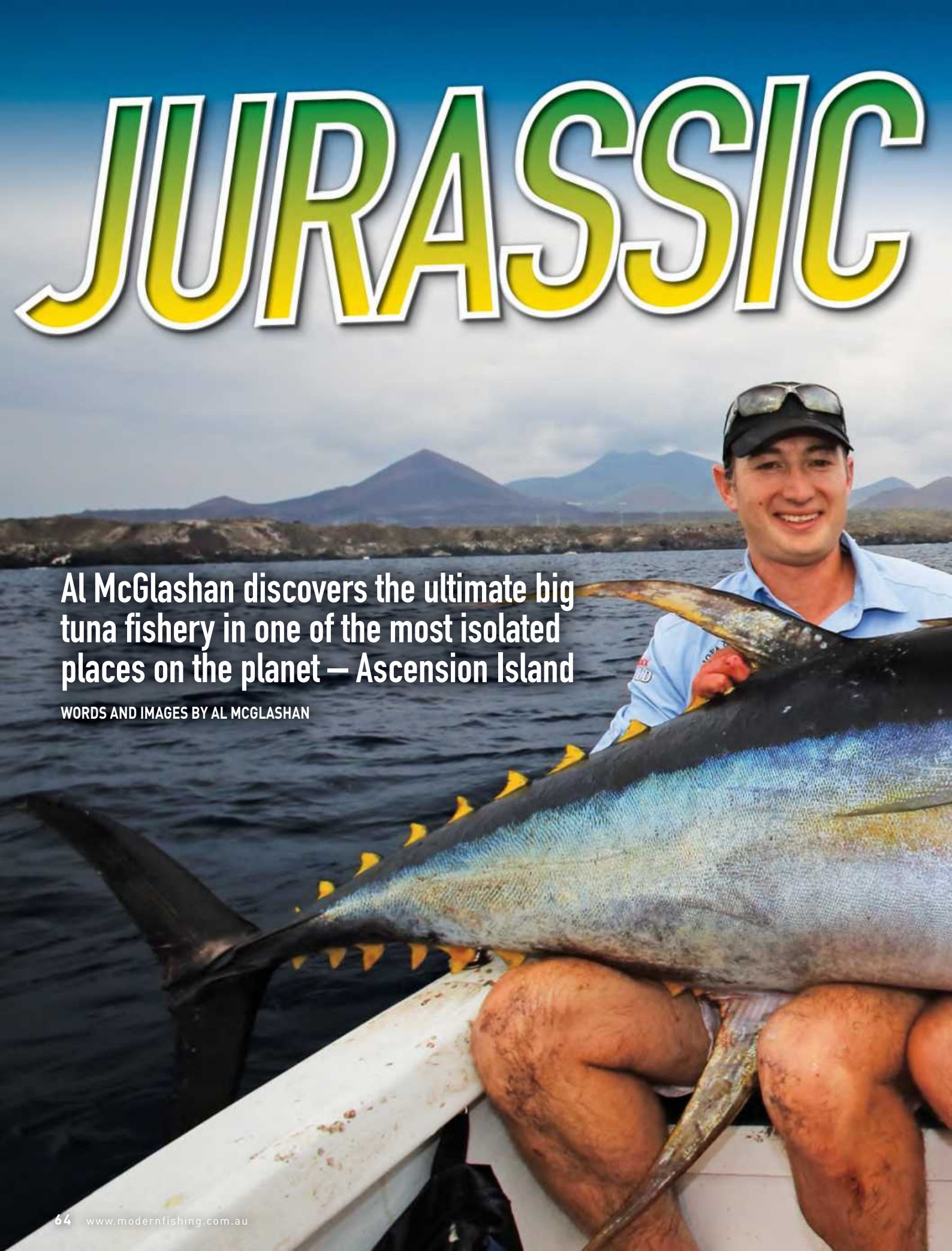
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JURASSIC



Al McGlashan discovers the ultimate big tuna fishery in one of the most isolated places on the planet – Ascension Island

WORDS AND IMAGES BY AL MCGLASHAN

PARK



A sudden flash of colour caught my eye. At first I thought it was a shadow from the many frigates flying overhead. We had barely started the cube yet, so surely the fish couldn't be up in the trail already. Pausing for a minute I held the handful of chopped up pilchards momentarily before tossing them in. The response was instantaneous and it wasn't a small tuna but instead a barrel of a fish with massive sickles stretching to its tail – the fish rolled on the cubed pilchard right at the boat almost as if to show us its true size.

All I could do was stare in shock, unsure whether to believe my own eyes. Easily more than 100kgs - it was massive and it was real. Mick Lyons and local gun Colin Chester also watched on as the tuna, completely unfazed by our presence, cruised around scoffing up each and every cube I tossed in. All my life I have dreamed about seeing a huge yellowfin in the trail but thanks to purse seiners decimating stocks in the South Pacific it became a pipe dream which is why I had travelled halfway around the world to Ascension Island, just for a chance of seeing one of these beasts. I had only been here one day and already it was reality!

Instead of reaching for the rod, it was my fins and underwater housing that I grabbed and seconds later I was in the water, face to face with my lifelong dream. I wasn't sure what to expect as I entered the water - I figured the fish would be shy and keep its distance, however it did the complete opposite and swam straight up to me. Obviously inquisitive, I have to say I actually reared back for a second because the fish was just so big. The tuna seemed completely unconcerned, occasionally coming in to check me out in between scoffing down any amount of pilchards.



Then just when I thought it couldn't get any better a second and even larger fish appeared to join the party.

I had been on the island for barely 24 hours and already my dream had come true. As I snapped pics and filmed the whole event, I almost had to pinch myself to make sure it was real and little did I know, it was only the beginning.

"No wonder the place has earned the name Jurassic park!"

THE MISSION

A few years ago I had never heard of Ascension Island. Then out of the blue, whispers of massive yellowfin from a tiny rock in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean began to filter through. I had been planning to fish Panama but the reports of daily encounters saw Ascension Island hitting the number one position on my ultimate bucket list destinations. It had everything - clean water coupled with some of the biggest yellowfin in the world. Most importantly it was still completely unexploited, just the way I like it.

Now when I mean remote I mean it is one of the loneliest islands in the world. Tucked away in the South Atlantic Ocean, it is thousands of kilometres from anywhere and a serious effort is involved in getting here. Mind you the distance is only half the problem. It's also a military outpost so you can't simply book a flight and turn up. Instead you need special permission and then to complicate matters even further, there is only one flight to and from the island and that's a military plane via the RAF base in England some ten hours away!

On top of all of this, we had the added hurdle of wanting to film on the island to contend with. We were making a documentary series following my fishing antics and Ascension Island was number one on the list. Now getting there on your own is hard enough but throw in a camera crew and the army guys all of a sudden took security to a new level. We persevered though and after enough paperwork to destroy an entire rainforest we finally got the go ahead and were on our way to the other side of the world.

It's a big commitment to drag a camera crew to such an isolated location especially when it's all on a whim. I admit I was nervous as hell about the whole trip falling over, because there's only one person who would get the blame if there are no fish, believe me. But on the first day it only took a few minutes to have tuna swarming around the boat. Then on day two we saw our first true monster and then the second and that set the precedent for the whole trip.



As anywhere, find the birds and you find the fish





SERIOUS ISOLATION

A small volcanic outcrop, Ascension Island is one of the most isolated islands on earth. It's basically 2000 kilometres out into the South Atlantic Ocean, halfway between Africa and South America and just below the Equator. A British Territory, it has always been a strategic military outpost with no actual inhabitants, in fact if you are not employed then you can't stay there.

Discovered in 1501 by Portuguese sailors, the desolate Island was ignored apart from passing sailors who plundered the prolific seabird colonies until an English garrison was stationed there in 1815 after Napoleon was imprisoned on St Helena Island.

In WW2 it was an important staging platform for attacks on Africa and while it is fortified with cannons it has never seen any battles. Today the English use it en route to the Falklands while the US have a strong presence there as well. The airstrip is one of the biggest in the world and was used as a back up to Cape Canaveral space centre in case the shuttles overshot the mark when returning from space!

Al photographed this monster until the crew decided it was his turn to jump on the rod - The huge fish destroyed the reel, the harness and then Al!



Hauling a 100kg plus tuna onto a boat is no easy task!



There were endless school fish but it was the big girls we were after

POPPER SUCCESS

Ascension is a really unique fishery that is basically like no other I have ever fished. The tuna came in two sizes - either 25 to 40kg school fish or monsters over the 100kg mark – there was nothing in between. Even more bizarre and despite being prolific, surface activity was virtually non-existent, in fact I didn't see a single tuna jump. One of the other boats the Harmattan which mainly chases marlin rarely ever caught tuna as by catch on skirted lures. This is strange when you think that back in Australia it's one of the most effective ways to catch tuna. However to throw a spanner in the works at the very same time, poppers work a treat. Blind casting with big noisy poppers that would be better suited for GTs are deadly but not on the little fish just on the big ones - go figure!

As weird as it was, this strange scenario suited the other half of our crew - Sondal Bensan and Jamie Bezzina were along for the ride and all they wanted was to catch a monster 'fin on a popper. Now throwing lures on PE 10 rods and a Stella 30,000 is all too hard as far as Mick and I were concerned so while we continued to cube them up, the boys cast and cast and cast. On day three after a few near misses Sondal finally came up tight and better still would you believe we had just deployed the cameraman onto his boat. That fish snapped the hooks but his second shot an hour later stayed attached.

Now, I should explain there isn't a lot of choice when it comes to boats on Ascension Island so Sondal was fighting the fish of a lifetime out of what can only be described as a rubber ducky. Suddenly the odds were stacking up steadily against him as the fight wore on with the fish of a lifetime, especially on spin gear. Four hours later though, the fish finally came up and it was massive! This is where we discovered the upside to using a rubber ducky for game fishing - getting the fish in the boat is much easier! Mind you getting it up onto the wharf where you have to physically drag it up a set of seriously big stairs adds a whole new element to the adventure. Finally though, we got the fish on the scales and it dragged them down to a massive 112kg - you bloody ripper!

TAKING THE PLUNGE

The more I fish the less I seem worried about actually catching the fish. I know it sounds silly but a big part of my fishing these days involves jumping in and filming them underwater and doing it with a jumbo 'fin is right up there at the top of the list. By day two I had already achieved this and then on day 3 I had enjoyed swimming with not one but two monsters.

Seeing these fish in their natural environment gave me a whole new appreciation of how they behave and react to each other because there is a very distinct pecking order in the underwater realm. What was really interesting was how the fish behaved to a bait with a hook in it. The big ones were definitely a lot more wary, while the smaller, less educated fish just raced in and ate everything.

One day we had a big fish up on its own and while I was in the water filming it, Jamie and Mick fed it a bait. I watched the bait drift down and the tuna ate everything except the intended one. This was then repeated three times. There was no doubt the fish saw the leader and possibly the hook. To get a hook up we downsized the hook and leader and then took considerable time to completely conceal the hook. On top of this they tossed a couple of cubes to get the fish right up to the boat and then threw in a handful with the hooked bait landing first. The fish did hesitate and as if conditioned, bit it. However being underwater I watched it try and spit it almost immediately but it was too late and the hook found its mark. Now this experience really highlights the importance of finesse when chasing tuna, especially the big ones on the cube. Light leader's, small hooks and precise hook placement are essential. Diving with tuna pays dividends!

Another observation I should note is that while I am a big fan of fluorocarbon, I did notice that it would cause the bait to sink quicker than the others cubes. Now this made it stand out more and it was quite obvious that the fish noticed it. The tuna would cruise up but shy away at the last minute and it was only when there was a bit of competition did they eat it quicker. The other point worth mentioning is that having now dived with dozens of monster 'fin they all have individual personalities, some were a bit shy, others cruise up cautiously and then you have the ones that were completely fearless. Normally you would think the biggest were the boldest purely because of size but in reality it was often the opposite with the small 30 keggers racing in while the big boys would hang back. However, the biggest fish of the trip had no fear whatsoever.

TRAVEL FACTS

Getting to Ascension is not easy nor cheap for that matter. You can't just jump on a plane and cruise over, instead you have to get permission to enter. As an English territory it's obviously UK owned but with a strong military presence, you have to apply for access and then there is the flight. The only way in is with Air Tanker which flies out of Brize Norton in England. To make matters even harder, there are only ten seats allocated for civilians on the plane so you need to book basically a year in advance to have any hope of getting on. On the accommodation side of things you are pretty much limited to one hotel which is reasonably priced and offers a selection of accommodation but do not expect anything fancy. The good news is there are a few bars on the island and the beer is relatively cheap and I can assure you we made good use of!

"All my life I had dreamed about this moment and then here it was – the biggest yellowfin I had ever seen by far!"



Big poppers are the way to tempt the big girls!

DARWIN EXPERIMENT

When the island was first discovered there was literally no plants at all. Charles Darwin made an experiment of the island to create an eco-system and generate rain fall by building a forest of imported plants. The aptly named Green Mountain is home to an amazing array of plant life from banana trees to figs and it's all flourishing and rains regularly. It's a stark contrast to the lower reaches of the island that are still Mars like in appearance but slowly the plant life is expanding out and taking over as evolution takes a hold.



A large fish purposefully cruising through the faster moving school fish

JUMBO TIME

Midway through the trip I had tallied up a heap of dives with fish up around the 115kg range and was learning heaps but I had yet to see a true monster in excess of the magic 300 pound mark. The Harmattan landed a 134kg fish on the 4th day, which they had tried to release but it had swallowed the lure. While it was only slightly larger, it looked massive compared to the 100kg fish and absolutely dwarfed the 35kg school fish.

Having now cracked my first goal, I was greedy and wanted a beast and it happened the very next day. We had a string of smaller fish at the boat when the other boat called to say they had huge sharks hanging around. Eager to film the sharks we raced over and suddenly had heaps of schoolies and some seriously big sharks in the 3 metre range cruising about. Despite their size the sharks didn't like my presence at all and quickly departed leaving me wondering what on earth was going on. And then the mother of all tuna arrived! All my life I had dreamed about this moment and then here it was - the biggest yellowfin I had ever seen by far!

Fearlessly, it cruised straight up to me, its massive sickles stretching right down to its tail and its size giving a whole new meaning to the term barrel. Unlike the smaller fish that raced and darted about the big boy did everything with purpose. All I could do was stare at it as it came so close I could touch it. The next half an hour was one of the best of my life (apart from having kids - Rach made me add this!).

I was suddenly brought back to reality when I climbed back in the boat. "Time you caught a bloody fish" growled my series producer Brad Cone. This started a stand up argument about whether I really needed to put myself through the pain of catching one. "You host a fishing show so catch the damn thing!"

However, we quickly realised that hooking the big one amongst all the little ones was a real problem. We tried to toss the bait in front as the fish swam past but copped a couple of

rejections. The next step was to hold the bait straight off the rod tip with just the baits tail in the water and then as the beast swam through I'd let it eat it. Twice we missed and ended up with smaller fish and then suddenly it all came together. Never in my life have I had a bite like that on such a huge fish and best of all, we got it all on camera!

And that is where the fun finished. I have a love - hate relationship with big tuna and man I hated this one. It was simply too big and suddenly my tackle was looking way too flimsy. We have been experimenting a bit with a harness system for spin gear and admittedly still have a long way to get it right. While the harness was certainly taking the pressure off my arms, it was exerting huge pressure on the reel seat. This resulted in the reel seat coming loose and then the harness unexpectedly exploded an hour into the fight. I was so lucky I didn't lose the outfit over the side!

A make shift harness was set up but I was struggling to crank the handle with the reel shifting sideways and I can assure you I was giving it to the boys for making me go through this pain. After a couple of hours we were ten miles away from where we hooked it and I was starting to get concerned that if the fight went on for too long that the fish would die. We had saved our last tag for this one and the last thing I wanted to do was kill it. So I made the decision to up the drag and finish the stalemate.

My back was killing me but the added pressure worked and the fish started to come up. In fact I got it to within 40 metres when suddenly the 100 pound braid exploded. I have never busted 100 pound braid before but it just shows how much pressure we can exert on a fish these days. I had mixed feelings losing that fish. On one side I was desperate to catch what would have been the biggest yellowfin I will ever see, but equally I desperately didn't want to kill it, so even though I lost it I was still happy to see that it's still swimming around to fight another day.



TAG AND RELEASE

Being so remote, Ascension is in the unique position to make a great case study for tag and release. If early signs are any indication, the population of yellowfin is at least semi resident. Now this is exactly what we used to have in NSW, places like the Peak and Montague Island were home to the biggest tuna in the country and we screwed it up by killing them all. Nowadays, they are nothing more than memories, so it is essential that Ascension is protected and not destroyed. Don't get me wrong I am not against eating them but trophy hunting needs to stop because they are simply too precious. We tagged heaps and while I couldn't beat the big one, at least it's still swimming!

I should also add that I filmed a satellite tagged fish which had been released several months prior. This reinforces the semi resident approach and highlights the need for more research which the Ascension Island Government is doing thanks to funding from the Darwin Institute. Its early days but with the research already underway we should be able to unravel what is happening in this very special place.

"I had travelled halfway around the world to Ascension Island, just for a chance of seeing one of these beasts"



Sondal Bensen hooked up and fighting his massive fish that he successfully lured on a large popper



School yellowfin on the cube with one displaying a satellite tag



Sondal's massive fish back at the dock pulled the scales down to a whopping 112kg! Believe it or not, there are plenty of bigger fish in these water's

Ascension was a trip like no other I have ever experienced. Sure it is a massive mission to reach but on the same note that is half the adventure. The island itself is so unique but it's the tuna fishing that is out of this world and there is nowhere else on earth that can boast such huge yellowfin in such massive numbers. By the end of the trip we got three fish over 100kg including one even for Brad the cameraman, while the other crews caught fish as big. No wonder the place has earned the name Jurassic park!

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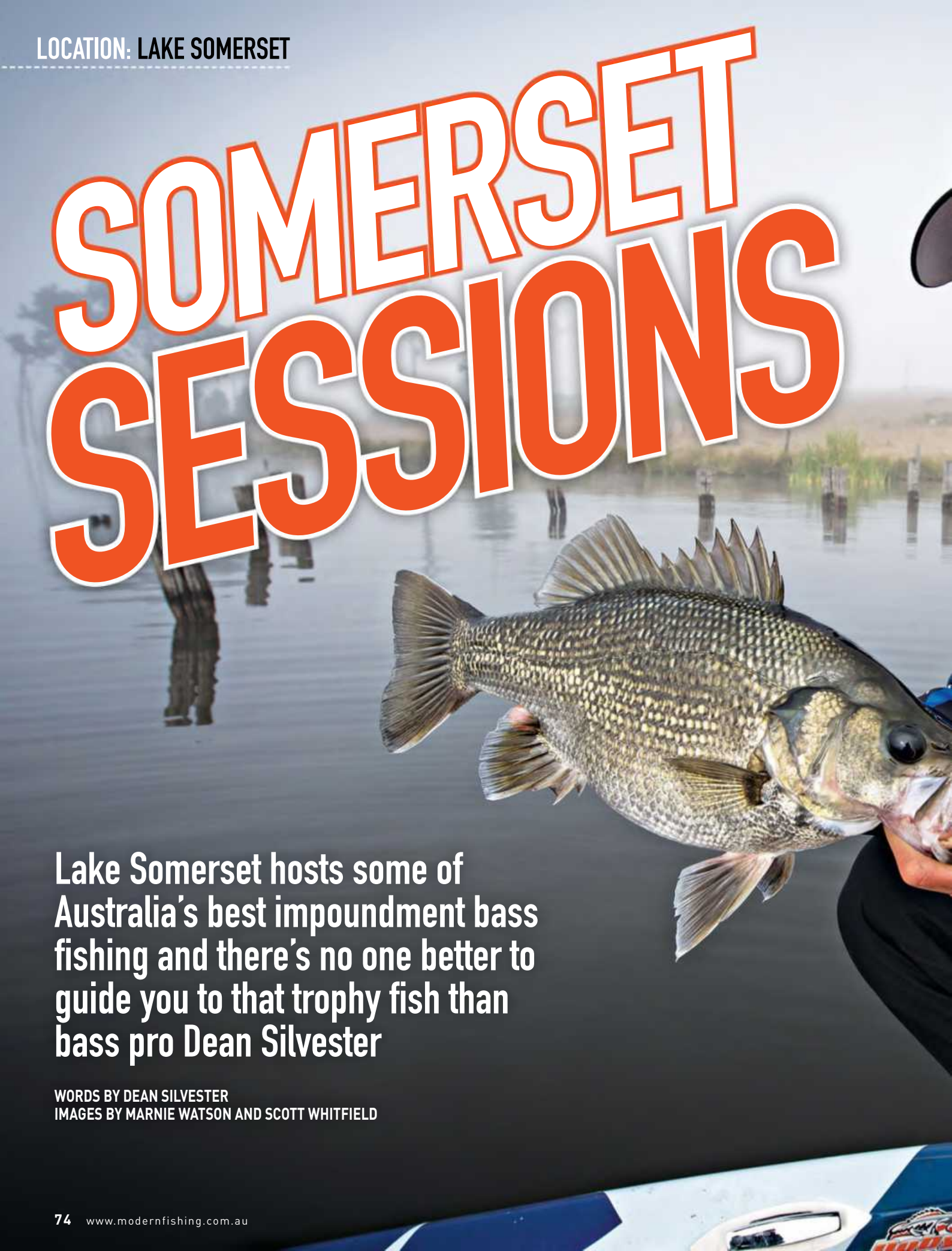
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SOMERSET SESSIONS



Lake Somerset hosts some of Australia's best impoundment bass fishing and there's no one better to guide you to that trophy fish than bass pro Dean Silvester

WORDS BY DEAN SILVESTER
IMAGES BY MARNIE WATSON AND SCOTT WHITFIELD


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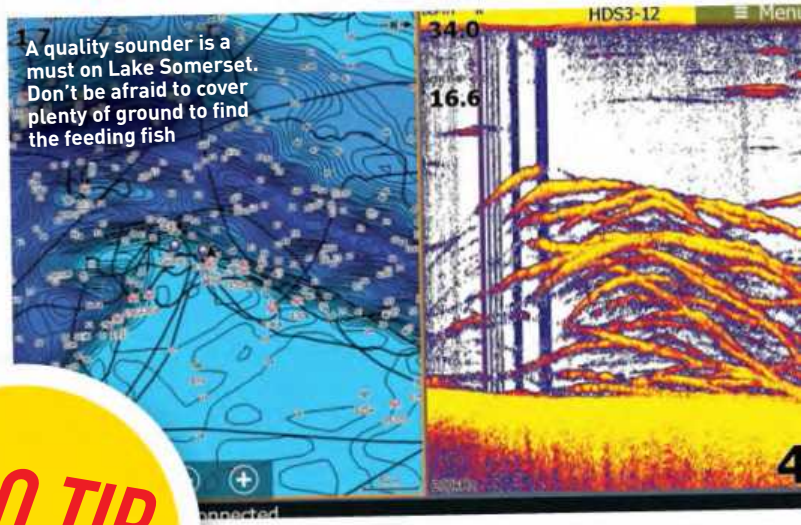
LOCATION: LAKE SOMERSET

Finding fish in Somerset is always a challenge, nevertheless bass are creatures of habit tending to stick to what they know. I have spent three parts of a day searching for the illustrious holy grail and way pointed them only to find they are on the same spot I found them this time two years ago. If you are a regular to the dam then you will be well versed with locations such as Queen St, Bay 13, Pelican Point and so on and so on. However if you are a new comer to the dam then these terms will mean little or nothing to you.

Two things I suggest doing before attempting to locate bass in Somerset, firstly print or purchase a map of the dam that has the names of the various points and bays throughout Somerset. Secondly, providing you have a Lowrance or Simrad sounder, upload the Insight Genesis map for Somerset Dam so you can view the exact river bed location and various contours across the lake. If there are any rules to bass fishing I would say the next two apply in almost any location.

Fish love structure and break lines/drop offs. Bass like to utilise the river bed as a theoretical highway to get from one point to another, subsequently needing to feed they will travel up the break line onto adjacent flats. Likewise with points, they are a location that tends to bunch the fish up as they take the shortest route past the point and will use this as a vantage point to target bait fish that are holding here. Points may not be visible from land or easy to pin point from the lay out of the surrounding terrain. Pelican Point for example has three productive areas at each corner and they are nowhere near the physical point itself. A quality sounder is vital in a location like Somerset as the main food source is bony bream which itself is a schooling fish - find the bait and you find the fish.





A quality sounder is a must on Lake Somerset. Don't be afraid to cover plenty of ground to find the feeding fish

PRO TIP

Don't be scared to look for fish, the effort taken to locate the right fish is well worth the wait.



Jackall Mask Vibes are a proven lure on the Lake



You can expect to see some incredibly plump fish on Somerset!





"In the lead up to a storm you'll be rewarded with some of the best bass fishing you will ever experience"

A TEMPERAMENTAL BUNCH

Bass are a very temperamental species - they don't like sudden changes, cold snaps and wind direction changes tend to shut them down. About the only change I have noticed that works in our favour is an afternoon summer storm, as the storm is rolling across and the wind starts to drop the fish light up and will eat almost anything you throw at them for that hour or two before the rain actually hits. Summer is typical of an afternoon storm and if you can withstand the humid lead up to the storm you will be rewarded with some of the best bass fishing you will ever experience.

Wind plays a big part in summer bass fishing on Somerset for a few reasons. A constant breeze over a few days moves the bait to one side of the dam and keeps it tightly bunched which in turn keeps the bass grouped in an area. However have a few days of random weather and the bait scatter making the fish less bunched and harder to locate. Don't be deterred by the wind, it helps disperse the light and makes the fish less finicky and often shallower and easier to target. The weather affects the fish as much as it affects us, if it is cloudy and windy over night the bass will be holding shallower in the morning then they would if it was a calm moon lit night. A foggy morning as much as it is a pain to navigate through is one of our biggest allies when chasing summer bass, the longer the sun takes to penetrate the morning mist the better the bite will be.



"Somerset is one of the best locations to catch big numbers of big fish"

1 IN 4 CHANCE

SOFT PLASTICS

The paddle tail style has always been a big fish catcher in Somerset Dam or any bass dam really. It is such a versatile lure that can be fished at any depth with varying retrieves depending on the weight of the jighead on which it is rigged. My favourite summer technique with plastics is to rig a half ounce head with a larger style plastic (even 4 inch isn't excessive) and I'll retrieve it with a fast erratic style action. Cast as far as possible to ensure the chance of passing active fish, let it sink to the bottom then start a quick retrieve with constant shakes of the rod. Once you feel as though the lure is roughly at mid water free spool it back to the bottom, then start again. One thing to watch for during this technique is fish grabbing the lure as you free spool it back. Bass often follow something of interest but need a change in action to draw a response, a pause or a twitch is sometimes all it takes.



Bass are the superstar but good numbers of fat yellowbelly call Somerset home too



Find the fish and get bent!

THE ILLUSTRIOUS TAIL SPINNER

This lure was hot amongst bass anglers back in 2005-2006 then it fell from fame and was practically not used until the last two years. This lure has an uncanny knack of enticing shut down fish to strike. The tail spinner is a reaction lure, drawing a response from the fish by the flash of the willow blade. It is another lure that enables anglers to fish to their own style or technique. You can vary your retrieve in several ways but the two most common are the slow roll or the high draw. Both work as effectively as each other however you have to work out what entices the bass on the day. Slow rolling the lure close to the bottom means they have to get out of the way of the lure or hit it to see what it is as it is so close to the bottom they can't get a fix on it. The high draw on the other hand plays into the fact that that the willow flutters on the fall and the lure is lifted up above the fish and allowed to flutter back through them. Most of the takes on a tail spinner are on the pause or the fall of the lure. It is vital that full attention is paid to the line at all times or the subtle take will be missed.

Dean holds one of Somerset's finest - fish well into the mid 50's are common!



Tail spinners are a great lure to target schools holding deep

THE JACKALL MASK VIBE

This has caught nearly as many fish in Somerset for me as the soft plastic. This soft vibe has a similar appeal to the fish as the paddle tail. It is a natural looking and feeling bait with a subtle action that they just can't resist, unlike the tail spinner, this technique is about matching the hatch. They eat vibes because they look natural and have the action of a dying or fleeing bait fish. My favourite and most productive way to fish this lure is with short sharp flicks of the rod as you lift and raise it from the bottom. You don't need to cast a long way as the retrieve is fairly slow, once the lure has reached the bottom start with a snappy flick of the rod making the lure jump from the bottom and then fall back down. This will act as if it is a dying bony bream and a big hungry bass will not be able to resist. Predominantly these lures are eaten whole but if you don't set the hook the instant you feel the bite then the lure will be spat back out before you know it. The one advantage however is that the lure is soft so they don't often spook and will come back again giving you a second chance at hooking them.

PRO TIP

Mix up your technique and lure styles regularly. Somerset fish can switch on to the slightest alteration in your presentation.

CRANK BAITS

These are often seen as trolling only lures, but in the midst of a hot summer day the bass will sit high in the water column in a comfortable depth, often appearing as if they are almost flat lining on the sounder. For whatever reason a noisy crank bait that will run at the depth the fish are sitting in always manages to draw a response. I have had occasions when I could not catch a fish on any typical technique and crank baits have produced double hook up after double hook up. Using a crank bait to target suspended fish takes the guess work out of how deep your lure is running. In the middle of the day when the fish are sitting like this it pays to trial a few techniques before giving up on them. They may respond better to a lure that is retrieved slowly and left in their face longer, at other times they will hit a quick lure that flashes past them simply out of reaction and instinct.

GET A MOVE ON

The most important point that I need to get across with Somerset bass is that the fish move, where you find them in the morning they may not be back there till the next morning and spots that drew a blank earlier in the day may have hordes of bass on them in the afternoon. On top of this, there are places that the fish travel through as well as a comfort zone that they will look for in the heat of the day. Sun and wind play a big part in how deep the fish will be sitting, the higher the sun the deeper the fish will move, however if you have a windy day the light won't penetrate as deeply so the fish will move shallower. In summer I like to keep in mind that the bass will move to the river bed in the heat of the day so when I am searching for them I don't move to far from the drop offs.

Some basic thoughts to keep in mind are that 25-29 feet flats adjacent to a drop off in the mornings are a good place to start – two places that come to mind are Kirkleigh Flats and Queen St.



Fog on the lake can really turn the fish on

"If it all comes together, the rewards this place can dish out are something special!"

In the middle of the day and up until possibly 3pm if you choose to fish that is, I would be looking in the river bed adjacent to the flats you fished in the morning. The river bed runs parallel to most of the popular flats however the two most productive sections that I have fished are along Queen St through and past the flats in Bay 13. The river bed is anywhere from 55 feet to 78 feet and the fish will be suspended in the top 20 – 30 feet, so set up your sounder to focus on the top layer of the water column to make it easier to spot the fish.

Late afternoon is definitely the most productive and action filled part of the day, the bass seem to be warm active and eating almost anything. Start looking in 32-35 feet of water practically on the ledge of the river, the fish will often only appear as one's and two's to start with before the whole school make themselves noticeable. As the afternoon presses on they will be more comfortable moving further and further up the flats however will still be in a similar depth. The best locations for good afternoon sessions are Pelican Point and Bay 13 as they have the biggest areas with the right depth for the fish.





PRO TIP

Get a general understanding of the names in the dam, people will tell you places fish are holding and you need to know where that is.

Somerset is undoubtedly my favourite location to chase impoundment bass. It's one of the best locations to catch big numbers of big fish and while they can be a bit tricky to work out, that's just part and parcel of fishing on any impoundment and is also one of the reasons we do it. If you get it wrong, you can be looking at a very frustrating day as you know the fish are there but if it all comes together, the rewards this place can dish out are something special! See you out there this summer! MF

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Image courtesy of Arnhemland Barramundi Nature Lodge

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The diving birds in the picture below resulted in a hectic session on Mack tuna!

EYES IN THE SKY

Birds are a great indicator of feeding fish from impoundment's right through to the open ocean

Birds play a very important role to the angler while out on the water. They are the eye in the sky and provide information that we simply would never be able to obtain, even with the latest and most expensive electronics.

Over many forms of fishing, they are the giveaway to where the fish are holding. Birds possess several natural advantages that make them the perfect hunters, the ability to search the ocean or rivers at a great height and with high powered vision. Height not only allows you to see a further distance but also allows you to see further in to the water as well.



Bluefin are easily located by looking to the sky for birds

"Keeping an eye on the birds can help you find all manner of fish – not just the pelagic species"

Most birds also have a good sense of smell, which is perfect for finding the oils released from bait balls. They can also give visual cues to each other as to where the food is. Something as simple as the flash of white from a wing of a bird that is diving is a calling for other birds to come and check out what's going on, chances are there is food up for grabs.

Most commonly when fishing for pelagics, birds are what to look for to find the fish. Pelagics move incredibly fast and can be hard to find, but birds are a telltale sign and give the angler a position to direct angling efforts. Terns, gannets, frigates and albatross are what you should be looking for when trying to find pelagic fish. Birds that are stationary or dipping indicate that there are fish close by.

The height the birds are holding at is also something that should be closely looked at. There is a common belief that the higher the bird, the deeper the fish, and when the birds start getting close to the water or diving in to it, you know something's about to go down!

Last year in Broome, my good mate Ben Little pointed out a large frigate bird that he said always follow the bigger marlin around. I can really understand that bird, I'd be following the big marlin too! Billfish are generally found around the bait balls and the best way to locate these areas is by looking to the sky.



Birds usually mean fish

Our feathered friends have been the giveaway to where we have been finding most of our snapper schools in recent times too believe it or not. You can actually hunt down schools of feeding snapper, both surface and subsurface, by looking for birds. Usually in this scenario, leather jackets have been on the menu and I reckon the birds are feeding on the scraps left over. While they are not finding the bait for you, they still put you straight on to the fish. This is not a new occurrence, as our friends over the Tasman in NZ have been looking for schools of snapper by following the birds for years. While fishing NZ a couple of years back I was amazed to be catching snapper sitting on the bottom in 35 metres of water that were located by looking for birds.

Even on the mighty River Murray, birds give away the areas where bait is holding and the predatory fish are feeding. Bony bream schools are the prime food for large Murray cod and these fish are easily found by looking for lots of pelicans. These birds are feeding on bony bream and usually there will be some very big cod underneath them feeding up as well. Pelicans again are a great giveaway on artificial dams where they tend to congregate to feed on the bait populations that push into the shallows. Bass, barra and everything in between can be found by looking for pelicans.

Birds are such an important set of eyes for fisher people, so don't ignore them next time you hit the water as they are looking for the same thing that you are. MF

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A king and samson caught side by side from an offshore reef system on jigs

THE TERRIBLE TWO!

Kingfish and Samson's are two species that pack a serious punch, and have many similar habits, but how do they stack up when put side by side?

When you've got two fish that come from the same family, comparisons are always going to be made and opinions formed. Even more so when both species happen to fall for similar methods and have a considerable crossover in their distribution range, as is the case with two members of the Seriola clan - the samson fish and the yellowtail kingfish.

WHERE TO SCRAP

Both the king and sambo have a significant range, being found around much of the bottom half of the country and up through east coast waters, and are well-known to overlap in many areas of their natural range.

These sizable predators need a reliable food source and large offshore reefs and islands tend to be their strongholds, in part for the food factor, but also the lack of fishing pressure which sees them school up and grow to frightening sizes.

From our experience kingfish tend to hold higher up on the large underwater reef systems, while samsons will be lower down, although still show similarities by positioning themselves on the edge of ledges and drop-offs. Both species can be fairly mobile and will raid the shallows surrounding certain offshore islands.

King's and Samson's also have inshore moves, and the king even at the extreme upper end of its size range will push into shallow bays during its spawning period to load up on food and breed. In SA for example 90lb plus hoodlums are possible in only 2-3 metres of water in certain locations. Samson's will also be caught in shallow bays, particularly at night, highlighting how both species are active predators prepared to cover ground to locate a meal.


Large knife jigs are potent on both kings and samson fish


Speed is the key to successful kingfish jigging

TACTICS

The use of jigs is a common thread between the two species, and both are the centre of attention for serious jiggers, with predominately high-speed jigging methods accounting for the bulk of these fish.

In deep water both are responsive to flat-out mechanical jigging techniques, with knife-style jigs the pick of the bunch. Samson's are more susceptible to slow jigging techniques however, in part because they're more prodigious bottom feeders than kings, and they will fall for slow jig types more readily.

Live bait will catch both the king and samson with consistency, and they both share a habit of wanting to smack the scales off a struggling bait fish! A difference is though that the samson is more common on static dead baits fished hard on the bottom than kings are.

If you look at the physical make up of both fish, the king is a sleek, long muscular fish, with much more red muscle, while the sambo is stockier in profile and has a deeper body structure and much more white muscle, which points to a generally slower and more browsing type feeder (unless hunting down prey), while the king is the hyperactive never-sit-still type.

Trolling is more effective on kings given they're usually feeding higher in the water column, and it's easier to present a lure to them, although Samsons do eat nearly any lure type if you can get it in front of them.

THE FIGHT

So we've established there's many similarities with these fish, but how does the bronze brawn of the mighty Samson rate against those yellow and green missiles?

Kingfish can be slowly sauntering around your boat, but one prick of your hook and you'll suddenly be connected to one of the fastest and smartest fish swimming, and they'll pull out any trick they can to cut you off, including constant direction changes and wild lunges at structure. The endurance of genuine hoodlum sized fish is phenomenal also, with fight times upwards and over an hour common.

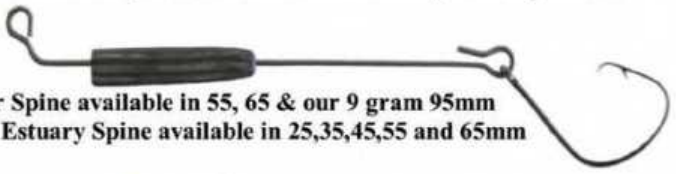
Samsons will still blitz you in the first few moments of battle around rocks, but generally once clear of the bottom you'll have a cleaner and less erratic fight than you get with a king. Don't judge them by the small versions either, when you start talking 30 and 40 kilo fish it's a whole new ball game and you have a speed-freak on your hands, and just as stubborn, tough as nails customer to wrestle to the surface.

Thankfully both species release well, with samson's probably the more fragile of the two, although samson's do vent and if cared for can be speared back or successfully lowered down using a release weight. Kings fight all the way to the surface and will shoot off the second they get a chance in the true 'wild thing' style that characterises them perfectly.

Both fish are as hard-as-hell, but head to head and pound for pound I'd give the kingfish the points for sheer speed and smarts. This said, those fisho's lucky enough to have one or both of these species in their home waters are truly blessed!

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FISHING WITH PARTNERS

Shauno shares some tips on how to convert your better half into a fisho

Just recently I was filming up in the Kimberley for 4WD Action and because I already had my 4WD up there I decided to take a couple of weeks off to explore the Kimberley in my own time. My girlfriend was very excited to get up there and see some of the best landscapes in the country and hike into gorges, swim and do other things that normal people like to do in the Kimberley. As you can imagine all of those things that my girlfriend wanted to see and do in the Kimberley sounded like fun, but to be completely honest I had one thing on my mind, the fishing!



A mackerel like this one is sure to get anyone's excitement levels up

Now this was a very delicate situation I was facing, the better half didn't mind casting a line but it wouldn't have even been in her top 10 things she wanted to do in the Kimberley. I needed to change that and change it fast!

The biggest tip I can give when trying to get your partner to enjoy a hobby you love is ease them into it and make it as enjoyable as possible. When I first took my girlfriend camping, almost 7 years ago when we first met I took her on a dirty weekend away. Unlike most other people's idea of a dirty weekend away, my idea was quite literal and involved hard-core 4WDing in the mud and winching up hills until way after dark. It was also winter and we were driving a soft-top Suzuki Sierra without a heater. When I finally got to camp to set up the tent, it was wet from the last time I used it and the zipper didn't work and it smelled of mould – the icing on the cake was it fell below zero that night. I had fun, but as you can imagine my then, new girlfriend didn't have the best introduction to camping or 4WDing that weekend. Seven years later, she's still with me and I've been able to get her to love camping!

"She was ecstatic and for the first time I think she got what this fishing caper was all about"

So for this Kimberley trip, instead of heading off in a 25nt wind fishing for 15 hours straight on a fishing trip, I picked the weather and went out on a nice day just for a few hours for some easy fishing. We trolled some barra lures in the bluewater, because that's all I had and after about 15min her RMG Scorpion gets hit and she is losing line so fast that her 4000 sized reel is nearly smoking. After around 20 minutes of her winding away like mad and complaining that her arms were about to fall off I tail a nice 18kg Spanish mackerel. She was absolutely ecstatic and for the first time I think she got what this fishing caper was all about. Better still, she was now happy to go fishing!

Again I didn't overdo it and I kept the fishing session short and fun. The downside to getting her keen on fishing though was the fact that she out fished me on the bluewater and then also on the barra!





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This 'Fish Cave' reef was designed to attract pelagic fish and placed in the Wild Banks area in Moreton Bay

ARTIFICIAL HABITAT

Intricate new designs of artificial reefs are leading to better fish habitat

There is something a little surprising in seeing fish happily living in and around man-made structures as they go about their daily lives. Strolling along a jetty or a breakwall, or pottering around boat moorings in a busy urban estuary or canal estate, it is more the norm than the exception to observe a whole range of marine life including seaweeds, shellfish, octopuses, small and large territorial fishes as well as other species of fish, all moving through or just hanging around manmade structures. Then again, the fact that fish are attracted to artificial structure is often taken for granted. The first fishing experience of many a childhood, mine included, was on the end of a suburban jetty or pier. In fact, in the US and Canada, jetties are often constructed for the sole purpose of providing recreational fishing platforms. Moving further offshore, shipwrecks have always been known as great diving and fishing sites, and oil rigs are perhaps the most impressive of all such artificial structures. These immense constructions are virtually manmade islands, extending from the seabed to the surface and attracting profuse marine life such as encrusting organisms, invertebrates, fish and even seal colonies.

"These reefs have been regularly monitored since deployment and all are doing their job of creating habitat where it did not exist previously"



The 'Fish Box' design is one of the most widely utilised designs, currently making up 5 offshore artificial reefs across Australia



For artificial reefs to be successful, careful consideration is needed regarding their placement

There is no doubt that artificial structures can and do provide suitable and varied habitat for whole marine and estuarine ecosystems. Many marine plants and encrusting organisms such as worms and shellfish begin life as swimming cells or larvae that must settle onto hard substrates within a critical period. The vast majority never make it, but random processes mean that any new underwater structure will quickly be colonised by plants and invertebrates (try the bottom of boats for starters). Next come the fish, again, either as larvae of species which actively seek reefs upon which to settle, or other species simply attracted to physical structure. There is even a great word for this desire to be near objects – 'thigmotaxis'. Schooling species such as yellowtail or kingfish tend to aggregate over, or stay within striking distance of structure while others such as bream will use structure for both cover and foraging.

All of this inevitably leads to the subject of artificial reefs; that is, underwater structure put in place specifically for the purpose of attracting marine life – usually for fish, but sometimes for diving as well. In the past, artificial reefs were made from many different sorts of materials including car tyres, car bodies, hulks of ships or rubble. However, recent years have seen a revolution in the design and construction of purpose-built reef structures, including towers made from steel and cubes moulded from concrete. Developed mainly in Japan, China and Korea, the shape and placement of these reef modules can be specifically designed as habitat for various reef species of fish, or even invertebrates such as abalone and crayfish.

A decade or two ago, artificial reefs attracted not just fish, but criticism. One of the main arguments was that new structure does not increase biomass but simply aggregates fish, thereby increasing the vulnerability of already fully or over exploited stocks, especially combined with the ease of finding the new reefs by means of GPS and sounders. The 'attraction versus production' debate went back and forth, but gradually the overwhelming evidence from many studies showed that well-designed, well-sited artificial reefs did increase productivity by providing brand new habitat that not only attracted adult fish, but more importantly, settlement sites for larvae that would otherwise perish, enabling the growth of new ecosystems. Certainly, Australian authorities have accepted these results, to the extent that large reef structures such as the ones described above have now been deployed in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. These reefs have been regularly monitored since deployment and all are doing their job of creating habitat where it did not exist previously.

Accidental artificial habitat will also work like designed versions, depending on water flow, tidal flushing etc. So next time you're wandering along a jetty, take a look over the side and think about where all those fish would be if it wasn't for that jetty. Oh, and don't forget to impress the kids fishing off the end of the structure by telling them what thigmotaxis means.

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THE GOODS!

Here's a sneak peek at the latest gear to hit the shelves

MAKO G0H2



Mako has just released their newest lens in the Blade frame, the G0H2. This grey lens base recipe with a red mirror has been carefully crafted using feedback from customers to deliver an all-round comfortable lens suitable for a wide range of outdoor activities.

The advantage of grey lenses is that they accurately and naturally represent the colours usually seen by the naked eye. This low colour distortion makes them extremely comfortable over long periods. The downside of grey lenses traditionally is that it is the darkest tint and therefore cuts more light out, sometimes making objects in shadows and low light more difficult to see.

By carefully manipulating the light coming through the lens, i.e. the amount of light able to pass or transmit through the filter, and adding their proprietary HD filter, Mako have created a grey lens like no other.

Comfort, clarity and contrast are maintained with low colour distortion and a wider active viewing window has been created meaning more hours of viewing time during the day. Grey lens wearers who found that the eyesight was somewhat compromised in low light will appreciate the excellent light replication this lens offers.

These durable glass lenses are available now, so visit www.makoeyewear.com.au for more information.

ABU GARCIA VERITAS 2.0



The updated Veritas series continues the tradition of lightweight design and sensitivity with a renewed focus on strength. By developing a Spiral Core Construction process with 30 Ton graphite blanks, engineers were able to significantly improve break strength without increasing weight. Overall break strength improved an average of 22% while tip strength increased by over 30%.

The all-new Veritas 2.0 from Abu Garcia continues the tradition of the previous series while leveraging improved construction processes and updated components to deliver the angler an advantage on the water. Available in 32 technique-specific actions including light jigging models, the Veritas 2.0 is stronger and more sensitive than the original thanks to a new Spiral Carbon Core Construction.

The updated series utilises a Fuji reel seat with custom carbon hood to ensure a secure connection and Fuji K and KR guides with Alconite inserts for peace of mind. Updates to grip configurations provide a new, more ergonomic handle design.

With an RRP starting at $199.95, the Veritas 2.0 delivers the performance anglers demand.

For a closer look, visit www.abugarcia-fishing.com.au

CABO GOES BIGGER

Quantum's new 120 Cabo spin reel enters the market on a high note, being rated as the 'No.1 Budget Offshore Spin Reel' by renowned independent fishing reel reviewer Alan Hawk. And with good reason, too: the level of drag seals and performance, overall reel strength and technology that Quantum has crammed into this price point is very impressive.

The big Cabo 120 is ideal for when you need genuine saltwater power for reef and offshore fishing with bait, lures or jigs. The sealed super-sized drag includes an impressive stack of ceramic, carbon fibre and stainless steel washers above the spool, with massive ceramic and carbon fibre washers under the spool, for increased drag capacity, excellent heat dissipation and smooth delivery of power under load.

The Cabo design has a modernistic lightweight frame yet more metal inside and out than its competition. The body and side cover are built from SCR alloy - a material designed in conjunction with marine engine metal experts for the ultimate in strength and corrosion resistance. Further protection is added with a SaltGuard 2.0 coating applied to the alloy prior to the painting process. The machined aluminium handle and ported aluminium spool add to the metal count, as does the huge centre shaft, which is complemented by stronger threads.

Cabo is designed to fish with braid but performs equally well with mono. The new 120's extra line capacity enables fishing deeper water and the extra drag power can turn big hard-fighting fish such as GTs, kingfish, tuna, samsonfish, amberjack, mackerel, reds, coral trout and billfish.

The new Cabo design utilises seven hybrid PT bearings plus one sealed anti-reverse bearing. Other features include a nickel-titanium bail and magnetic bail trip mechanism. For the icing on the cake, Cabo spin reels are lubricated with premium Hot Sauce grease and oil at the factory, so they're ready to drag in big saltwater fish, right out of the box.

Check them out at www.quantumfishing.com.au





SILSTAR BACKPACK

The new Silstar Backpack is a great fishing storage solution for Aussie anglers who love to explore new fishing spots and take plenty of fishing tackle.

A number of well thought out and easy access storage sections have been incorporated into the Silstar Backpack, making it ideal for storing extra fishing tackle, clothing, food supplies and even a pair of sunglasses. To keep your lures and hooks organised, this model comes with four tackle trays that are designed to fit the lower section of the backpack. When fully loaded, the large padded back section with adjustable straps makes the Silstar Backpack extremely comfortable to wear during extended fishing sessions.

Incorporating a 420 denier PVC shell with a 210 denier padded liner ensures that all contents stored in your Silstar Backpack remains protected from the heavy intrusion of water. The true test of a good backpack lies in the durability and longevity of zips, that's why the Silstar Backpack has Nylon zips that will not corrode if exposed to saltwater spray.

Available now at your local tackle store.

THE GOODS!

STEALTH BLUE CAMO



Saltwater anglers prefer to blend into their surroundings. Look at their boats, clothing and equipment: each is designed to outwit wary fish, so why expect anything else from braided line? The new SpiderWire Stealth Blue Camo Braid blends into bluewater surroundings, to give saltwater anglers an added advantage.

An addition to SpiderWire's Stealth lineup, Stealth Blue Camo is a tough, sensitive line designed with saltwater anglers in mind. The camo pattern alternates between deep blue, turquoise and white line segments that blend into the fish's environment. Above water, the white segments of the line make it visible to the angler for added support in detecting strikes.

SpiderWire uses Dyneema, the world's strongest fibre, to construct the line. Stealth Bluewater Camo is available in 6 to 80-pound test line and comes in 125, 300 & 2700 meter spools. RRP from $34.95.

Have a closer look at www.spiderwire.com.au

RAPALA AGGRESSOR



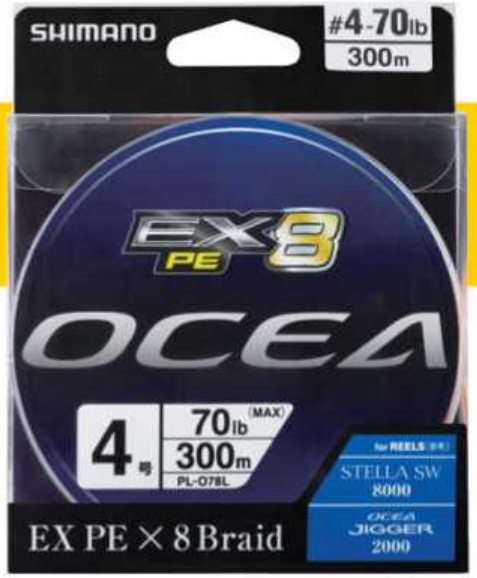
The all new Aggressor reels embody all that is synonymous with Rapala – quality, reliability, function and performance. This series of heavy-duty spinning reels features an aircraft grade alloy body and rotor, making it ultra-tough yet light enough to fish with for extended periods.

Incorporating 5+1 ball bearings into the body ensures faultless performance and all internal components are subject to a 72 hour anti-corrosive treatment to maximize saltwater durability.

A ported big capacity braid ready spool with carbon drag washers produces between 19kg and 25kg of relentless drag pressure. Such a high output of drag gives you the ultimate confidence as you take the fight to the fish and become the aggressor.

Available now in a 3500, 5000 and 7000 size, the Rapala Aggressor series is ideal for all medium to heavy jigging and casting techniques. All Rapala reels come with a limited 5 year warranty.

SHIMANO OCEA EX8



Designed with the highest quality Dyneema Fibres and woven with Shimano tuff cross Construction, this super silky eight strand PE line will see you confront and push new angling limits.

Ocea EX8 is incredibly thin and smooth for its strength, allowing anglers to fish in depths, currents and conditions that were previously unobtainable, while at the same time offering greater feel and sensitivity. With less than 1% elongation under load, Shimano Ocea EX8 PE line ensures that whatever happens at the lure end is translated to the angler in an instant.

PFLUEGER TRION XT RODS

Trion XT rods have long been a favourite of Australian anglers. A combination of graphite performance, quality components and great actions has established the Trion name in this country.

The Pflueger rod development team has revamped the Trion series while still maintaining all the features anglers have come to love about the Trion range. The Trion series features technique specific actions developed for Australian fish and conditions. The actions and performance of the Trion series is achiveved through a combination of high modulus carbon blank material, quality Fuji guides and reel seat delivering crisp and reliable performance in every fishing situation.

The Trion series now includes Fuji K Alconite guides and a new Hybra-Cork handle design that provides increased grip, feel and comfort.

Available in both spin and baitcast and 1 and 2 piece construction. There are light spin models perfect for flicking light lures for trout, bream and flathead. New medium to heavy spin models ideal for inshore lure casting. And a range of baitcasting versions from light right through to heavy for tropical species like barra and mangrove jacks.

RRP $149.95. Check out www.pflueger.com.au for a closer look.



WATERSNAKE SHADOW MKII

Watersnake has released its Shadow MkII Bow Mount foot-controlled electric motors. The four new models have the same DNA as the top-selling predecessors in the Shadow range but with new design features: The most noticeable is the small and sleek head design that also incorporates a digital voltage meter, so you can monitor your battery's condition throughout the day.

The other big change is the new variable-speed wired foot control unit, which has a water-resistant design and precision functions for responsive control over the direction and speed of your boat. It comes with a five-metre cable for flexible locating options.

Other features include a composite shaft that is unbreakable under normal conditions, a corrosion-resistant bracket, a weedless propeller design, plus a stainless steel prop shaft and large cradle for ultimate safety in transit.

The four models include a 44lb and 54lb thrust each fitted with a 48-inch shaft; and a 54lb and 65lb thrust matched with a 54-inch shaft. All have a large turning box for more infinite control in steering, fully encapsulated circuit boards, sacrificial zinc anodes and anti-corrosive treatments; ready for the harsh saltwater environments you fish.

Check them out at www.watersnake.com.au



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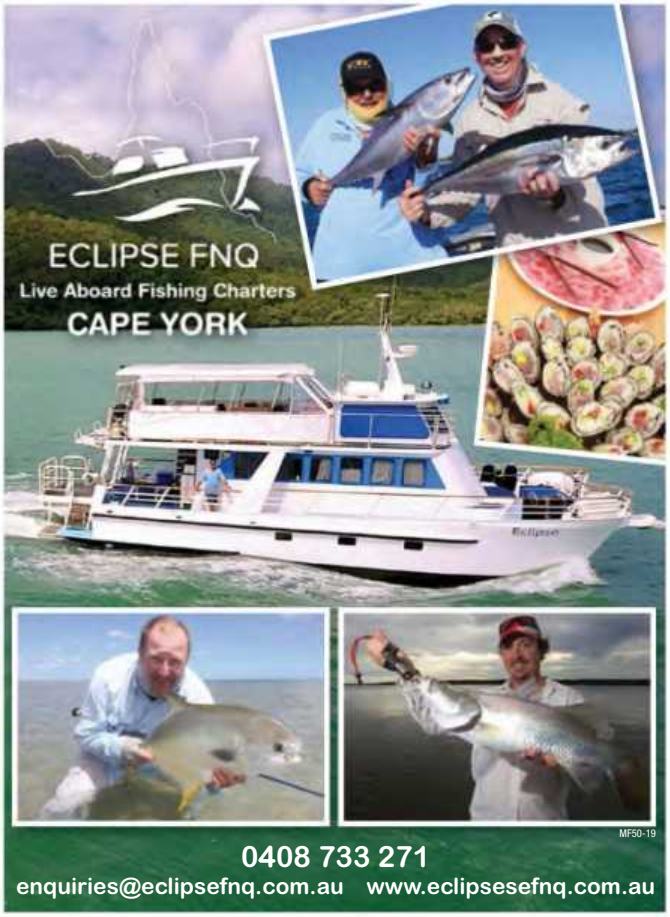
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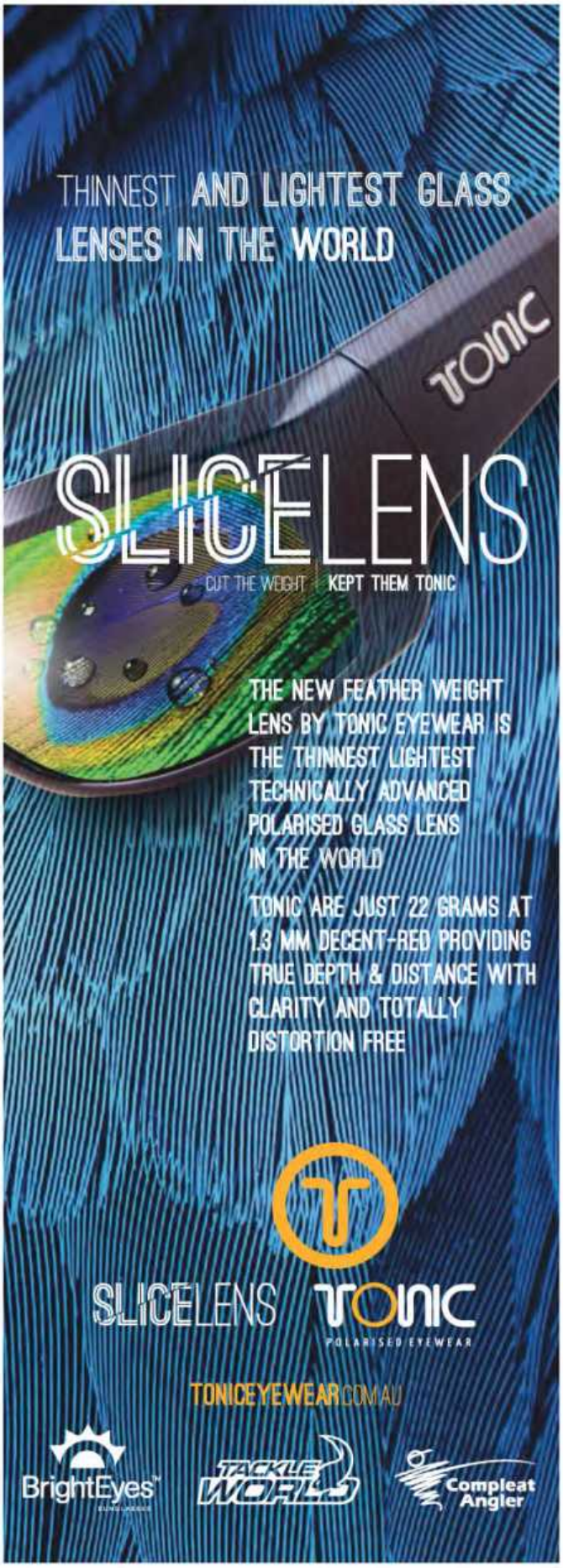
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